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**Resistance and re-appropriation
Music and politics in postcolonial France**

De Caunes, Aude

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**RESISTANCE & RE-APPROPRIATION:
MUSIC & POLITICS IN POSTCOLONIAL FRANCE**
Aude de Caunes

European and International Studies Department,
King's College London, University of London.
Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).
29 February 2012.

DECLARATION

The work presented in this thesis is my own.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aude de Caunes', with a stylized, flowing script.

Aude de Caunes

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Abstract

As a privileged vehicle for expressing the protean diversity of resistance without endangering the consistency of its politics, culture (and activist culture even more so) stands as a core foundation of struggle, the hidden arena of contestation, and a fertile terrain for reconfiguration of activism in France. Yet the pivotal political role culture may play in the age of globalisation has tended to be overlooked by recent academic research on contemporary social movements in France. Numerous monographs, articulated around studies of specific social movements, cultural trends or genres, have undertaken to partially analyse this 'culturalist' evolution of politics: studies detailing the ethos of specific instances of the *altermondialiste* movements taken in their cultural context; studies of cultural movements (such as the Creole cultural movement); or of sub-cultures such as French hip hop placed in their social context. And yet the study of the broader dynamic remains an overwhelmingly underexplored area of scholarly research.

This thesis undertakes an analysis of the inter-penetration between some contemporary musical forms and political resistance to neoliberalism, inscribed in a more global logic of cultural resistance to domination and oppression. One of its main purposes is to address the reasons why and the extent to which political resistance in contemporary France has taken an almost irremediable cultural turn. It presents a study of the dynamic of re-appropriation of symbolic power at stake in the emergence of a counterculture of resistance. The underlying concern of this project lies in identifying the extent to which musical practice is a particularly relevant form of political appropriation, or of re-appropriation of social identities, especially in areas of exclusion wherein the latter are very often denied or stigmatized, or at least generally essentialised by a variety of dominant narratives and discourses. Thus, it explores musical practices of resistance to neoliberal domination in socially marginalised areas of France, often associated with postcolonial communities. The aim is to better understand the kind of impact musical resistance has in the shaping of social identities in postcolonial France through their relation to political activism.

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Dedicated to the Moretti quartet who pulled the heartstrings of this composition:

Claire brought soul, Jean-Luc a good groove, Denise a melodic tune, Gaston an alert spirit.

To all my other families too – Théo, Sawsan and Loulou.

London, 31 October 2012

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Introduction. *L'Angle Mort*.

Musical practice as the interstitial space of resistance in postcolonial France

1. *Prolegomena: some elements of context*
 2. *Analysis: drafting our research project*
 3. *Outline: planning our enquiry*
-

Je cherche l'angle mort le vrai bug le faux raccord
L'anti-mouchard l'antidote l'anticorps
La doublure le doublon, canon scié dans le double fond
Le faux-fuyant le mirage
Dans lequel les chiens de garde n'apercevront que leur image
Le plus parfait des parfaits camouflages
Le trompe-l'œil épique l'exacte réplique au carbone 14 certifiée authentique
Mon 20 mesures cathartique a pris le maquis acoustique

Ici la périphérie est au centre
Et des territoires libérés s'inventent,
Au point du soir, au point d'y voir,
Clair dans le noir, clefs en main
Claustro-clandestins, les clebs au train,
J'ai fait de l'angle mort de ma vie une métaphore.

Au départ des courts-circuits, au croisement des contraires,
Au carrefour des massacres, au point d'impact des colères,
A contre-courant envers et contre toutes les muselières,
A périphérie des genres, au cœur des poudrières.
Je cherche l'angle mort.

Hamé – Casey – Zone Libre, 'L'angle mort', *L'angle mort* (2009).

1. Prolegomena: some elements of context

Toulouse, May 2001: Emerging mainly from local cultural associations and gathering militants around the emblematic anthem *Motivés* by Zebda, the ‘UPO’ (*Unidentified Political Object*)¹ grassroots collective *Motivé-e-s* makes a breakthrough in local politics by winning four seats at the municipal council.

Paris, Ivry, Argenteuil, Saint-Denis, May 2007: Spearheaded by Marseilles female rapper Keny Arkana, the Appel Aux Sans Voix popular assemblies, an itinerant caravan of local forums around France, gather grassroots communities, autonomous activists and a lot of youth who feel politically disaffiliated to passionately debate the question of the strategic vote (*vote utile*) for the Parti Socialiste in between the two rounds of the presidential elections.² In horizontal non-hierarchical discussions, people come to voice their discontents, recount their experiences about their living conditions in the *quartiers*, organise collectively around local issues, or share knowledge about international and local instances of political alternatives on the left.

Versailles, June 2010: Following an eight-year judicial struggle featuring one trial in the county court, two in the court of appeal and two in the final court of appeal, a final verdict discharges lead rapper Hamé from La Rumeur for the fifth time, at last and for good.³ In the case of Mohamed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé) vs. the Ministry of the Interior, headed by Nicolas Sarkozy at the beginning of the battle, the rapper is found not guilty of libelling the police for the text he wrote in 2002 denouncing the racist crimes of 17 October 1961 – when the police assassinated over 300 Algerians drowning them in the Seine river.⁴ While trials against rappers for libelling the police or ‘the nation’ have unfortunately become a rather mundane practice, this case, which featured a broad support campaign and a petition of over 10,000 signatures, remains to this day a unique and unprecedented instance of political repression in the recent history of hip hop censorship.

¹ Or *Objet Politique Non Identifié*. See description of the collective on their website: <http://www.motive-e-s.org>

² See <http://www.appelauxsansvoix.org/>

³ Mairé, Antoine (2010), ‘La Rumeur, huit ans de procès contre Nicolas Sarkozy’, in *Télérama* 29 June 2010, retrieved at : <http://www.telerama.fr/musique/la-rumeur-huit-ans-de-proces-contre-nicolas-sarkozy,57767.php>

⁴ See Einaudi, Jean-Luc (2001), *La Bataille de Paris : 17 octobre 1961* (Paris : Seuil) ; Le Cour Grandmaison, Olivier ed. (2001), *Le 17 octobre 1961 : Un crime d'État à Paris* (Paris : La Dispute).

Roubaix, October 2012: Following a complaint filed by AGRIF, a far right group nostalgic for the times of French Algeria and defending ‘French, Christian, White identity’ against ‘White French discriminations’ (*racisme anti-blanc*), sociologist Saïd Bouamama and ZEP (Zone d’Expression Populaire) rapper Saïdou are placed under judicial investigation for ‘public insult’ and ‘provocation and incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence’.⁵ Both activists are prosecuted for a bi-media cultural object they co-authored, a book and music album entitled *Nique la France : devoir d’insolence*. The headline song of the album elaborates on what this ‘insolence duty’ involves:

Nique la France et son passé colonialiste,
Ses odeurs, ses relents et ses réflexes paternalistes
Nique la France et son histoire impérialiste,
Ses murs, ses remparts et ses délires capitalistes.⁶

Globalisation, cultural polarisation and ‘social fracture’ in contemporary France

Over the last decade, France has seen a sharp increase in the number of cultural expressions of social discontent coming from different social traditions and cultural backgrounds. This constellation of heterogeneous voices overall paints an alternative landscape of colourful and diverse faces to counter mainstream political, institutional and cultural discourse. Gradually building on a growing disaffiliation with the state and dis-identification with dominant discourse on French society, these expressions are particularly flourishing among the *precariat* (i.e., unemployed or underemployed) such as the CIP network,⁷ some socially vulnerable age groups (e.g., the youth) and some culturally dynamic sections of lower class neighbourhoods and *banlieues* communities.⁸ The radical character of the contents and the reaction on behalf of institutions may vary. In some cases, as La Rumeur and ZEP above, the response from institutions is ruthless, mindless censorship. This is particularly true for hip hop of the so-called *rap conscient* type, as it outlines the sketchy and multifaceted contours of an autonomous *banlieues*, not purely ‘Christian-White’ French, radical political expression.

In fact this blossoming of cultural expressions may be attributed to an increasing democratic malaise within state institutions. With the sharp economic constraints of

⁵ AGRIF : Alliance Générale contre le Racisme et pour le respect de l’Identité Française et chrétienne. See <http://www.lagrif.fr/>

⁶ ZEP (Zone d’Expression Populaire), *Nique la France; Devoir d’insolence* (Darna ed. / Court-Circuit, 2011). See also ZEP website: <http://www.zep-site.com/>

⁷ CIP : Coordination des Intermittents et des Précaires. See <http://www.cip-idf.org/>

⁸ Widely used yet inexact euphemism, the term ‘banlieues’ is gradually being replaced by the term *quartiers* (short for ‘*quartiers populaires*’) to call socially deprived popular, working class areas, situated in the suburbs. See discussion below on discursive stigmatisation and intellectual ghettoisation.

globalisation, the institutional pressure of the EU framework and the national governments in crisis when confronted to global governance, a sturdy deficit of political representation in France is progressively undermining the credibility of her democratic institutions. The array of reactions, ranging from hostile rejection to mild disaffiliation with the state, taps into a steady and profound sense within civil society of the political sphere's increasing inability to respond to its demands.

While in 1980s France, the word 'class' had gradually been replaced in public debates by the disincarnated equivalent of 'social exclusion', in his 1995 presidential campaign speeches, Chirac borrowed Marcel Gauchet's expression *fracture sociale* ('social fracture') to qualify class struggle in France.⁹ The expression meant to capture the syndrome of an epoch, epitomising the ruthless dynamic of social transformations taking place under globalised capitalism and the resulting widening cultural divide in French society between on the one hand neo-liberal elites benefiting from and opened to globalisation and, on the other hand lower class communities withdrawing to their national or regional identities. As the term rang true to the ears of many voters and contributed to garner wide support for the presidential candidate, under Chirac's first term of office, the expression lingered in public debates after this brief moment of glory.¹⁰

And yet one cannot fail to notice that the 'fracture' has only worsened since then. The gap between state and civil society has considerably widened over the last decade, with the 21st April 2002 heralding a new stage further up the scale and bordering on a point of no return. The second Chirac mandate had had a bit of a rocky start. On 21st April 2002, with over 17% of the votes, Front National leader Jean-Marie Le Pen came second in the first round of the presidential elections, narrowly trailing the UMP candidate Jacques Chirac (19%) and defeating the PS candidate Lionel Jospin who barely garnered 16% of the vote. After an eventful week of spontaneous school walk-outs, mobilisations and demonstrations against the far right candidate, in the second round all forces of the left stood together in a broad consensus to support the candidacy of Chirac as a rampart against fascism, in a *union sacrée* gesture to save the Republic. Following this electoral 'trauma', the new voices of political protest in France have consistently emerged from, or at least become inherently connected to, artistic practices or more generally, cultural expressions.

⁹ See Gauchet, Marcel (1990), 'Les mauvaises surprises d'une oubliée : la lutte des classes', in *Le Débat*, n°60, May-August 1990, pp 257-266 ; p 257.

¹⁰ See Belanger, Eric, Cautrès Bruno, Foucault, Martial, Lewis-Beck, Michael S., Nadeau, Richard (2012), *Le vote des Français de Mitterrand à Sarkozy; 1988-1995-2002-2007* (Paris: Presses de Sciences-Po), esp. chapters 1-4.

As Fredric Jameson establishes, and as some globalisation scholars have confirmed more recently, the increasing inter-penetration of the economic, political and cultural in a global age have complicated attempts at categorical separation.¹¹ The aforementioned examples are not isolated instances: since the coming to the fore of resistance to globalisation in the mid to late 1990s, epitomised by the Seattle demonstrations in 1999, and the emergence of *altermondialisme* in France, cultural production has become central to global and local resistance to neoliberalism to such an extent that it could be said to constitute its base or root expression. In an age of disenchantment with parliamentary and electoral politics, activism has become much more grassroots and consequently more difficult to locate politically. Culture emerges as a means through which grassroots activism can resist institutionalisation and recuperation. The configuration of politics here is identified with the disempowerment of the masses and annihilation of resistance.

The hijab divide: race, gender and class in postcolonial France

As all four examples above show, an undeniably substantial part of those cultural expressions of social discontent convey a form of identification with ‘*banlieues*’ or ‘*quartiers*’, a renewed figure of the lower class neighbourhood in contemporary France. This affiliation marks the faultlines of a cultural polarisation around this social fracture. In addition, the cases of political repression of La Rumeur and ZEP indicate the increasing coming to the fore and cultural significance of a paradigm we will choose to name ‘*postcolonial identity*’ underlying these expressions of social discontent. The phrase *French postcolonial communities* shall refer in this thesis to what Hargreaves & McKinney call ‘minorities of Third World (i.e. ex-colonial) origin now settled in France’, conditioned by colonial intrusion overseas and initiated in the early 1960s by a significant migration wave of labour force, especially from North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, into the former colonial metropolis.¹² From the 1980s, postcolonial communities have often been reduced to, or overwhelmingly identified with, precarious populations mainly composed of French of

¹¹ If most scholars rarely envisage the study of global capitalism without referring to those three notional fields concurrently, Jameson argues that the distinction between economics and culture has altogether collapsed. This is particularly true in his writings on postmodernism. See in particular Jameson, Fredric (1991), *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London & New York : Verso), or the volume compiled in 1998 entitled *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London & New York : Verso). On globalisation, see selected articles on this issue in Held, David, McGrew, Anthony, Goldblatt, David & Perraton, Jonathan eds. (1999), *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity), esp. pp. 327-375.

¹² See Alec Hargreaves & Mark McKinney (1997), *Postcolonial Cultures in France* (London/New York: Routledge), p 6.

foreign descent or foreign immigrants residing in low-income housing projects established in the periphery of large cities – a phenomenon specifically acute in France for which the terms *banlieue* (suburbs) or *quartiers* (short for *quartiers populaires*, i.e. lower class neighbourhoods) have become a euphemism, literally epitomising the economic, societal and cultural marginalisation of those communities.

Hardly even acknowledged in France, the term postcolonial conveniently establishes links between debates around race, colonial history and the social question, encompassing thus the concerns affecting a lot of *banlieues* communities faced with racism, islamophobia and the colonial legacy in the deployment of discriminations or reproduction of specific inequalities. Those issues have all become an essential stake for those voices of political protest to construct an alternative. And yet the history of the political movements addressing those issues reveals that in most cases they hardly ever manage to surface and hit the mainstream debates. In that respect cultural expressions provide a key, more encompassing platform to facilitate discussions around the articulation between the much-repressed notion of class, disavowed tribute of colonial history, the essentialised concept of gender and the overly taboo concept of race in contemporary France. And as the case of ZEP illustrates, these expressions are hardly ever well received by the French state and the mainstream, notwithstanding an increasing legitimate rage against systematic inequalities, discriminations and the implementation of double standards in judicial treatment. The story of ZEP getting prosecuted is unfortunately far from being an isolated case. When French of ex-colonial descent – mostly Blacks and Arabs – choose to express publicly the rejection of discrimination and stigmatisation, the French state systematically puts in place an apparatus to organise repression and convince public opinion of the illegitimacy of such discourses, particularly if they come from those living in the *banlieues* – and even more acutely so for community activists and *rap conscient* artists. NTM, Sniper, Ministère AMER, Mr R, La Rumeur, Youssoupha or Houria Bouteldja are all rappers and activists prosecuted in recent years for speaking out in a manner judged too irreverent.¹³

As 9/11 heralded a new stage in the escalation of global islamophobia, in France, Muslim communities were made the scapegoat for all the social ills of the country. While the focus of stigmatisation in mainstream discourse over the last decade has become more specific, settling on Islam, in France this stigmatisation has keenly cristallised around the hijab

¹³ See Sonnette, Marie (2012), 'Qu'est ce qu'on attend pour foutre le feu : prédiction ou prédication ? Le rap sur le banc des accusés', in Jean-Marc Lachaud & Olivier Neveux eds., *Esthétiques de l'outrage* (Paris : L'Harmattan), pp 265-276.

question. Both a cultural consequence and an ideological screen for the crumbling of the welfare state, islamophobia has become a discursive device to systematise and further entrench the unequal treatment of French citizens at the expense of the Muslim minority among the communities of immigrant background and ex-colonial descent. But the paradigm of *laïcité* (secularism) endows French islamophobia with a specific dimension, most famously enforced with the discrimination against Muslim women wearing the *hijab*, and particularly violently enforced at school and in public institutions.¹⁴ Saïda Kada retraces the inception of a specific form of Muslim scapegoating to 1989 when, in the assimilationist name of '*les valeurs de la République*' (Republican values – read 'secular'), three female pupils are expelled from a state school in Creil.¹⁵

Underlying a chauvinistic reading of universalism construed in endo-determined terms, this Jacobin, integrationist conception of secularism, which reigns supreme in an overwhelming majority of all French institutions, has been used across the board by UMP and PS, by nationalist right and communist left discourses alike to justify the active exclusion and differential, unequal treatment of women of migrant, Muslim culture background.¹⁶ Amongst the fiercest enemy of *hijabi* women is the liberal discourse of forced emancipation confiscated and monopolised by mainstream feminism, coincidentally composed of an overwhelming majority of non-Muslim women.¹⁷ With the short-lived but rowdy heyday of *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* (2003-2004), the domination of these discourses only contributed to further stigmatisation of Arab and Muslim communities in general, pushing French society towards ideological polarisation around the paradigm of citizenship read in terms of national identity – a social divide generating cultural tensions which Sarkozy's accession to power and creation of a Ministry of Immigration, Integration and National

¹⁴ I choose the word here *hijab* as a generic translation for the French word '*voile*', insofar as according to Islamic scholarship, *hijab* is given the wider meaning of modesty, privacy and morality, making the head cover for women who choose to wear it outside moments or places of worship a symbol of these values endorsed and practised in their daily life. See Esposito, John (2003), *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (London : OUP), p 112.

¹⁵ Interview given in the film by Jérôme Host entitled *Un racisme à peine voilé* (H Prod, 2004). Retrieved at : http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7sjan_un-racisme-a-peine-voile-jerome-hos_webcam See also Chouder, Ismahane, Latrèche, Malika & Tévanian, Pierre eds. (2008), *Les filles voilées parlent* (Paris: La Fabrique).

¹⁶ See Guénif-Souilamas, Nacira (2006), *La république mise à nu par son immigration* (Paris: La Fabrique); Lévy, Laurent (2010), *"La gauche", les Noirs et les Arabes* (Paris : La Fabrique).

¹⁷ See Delphy, Christine (2010), *Un universalisme si particulier; Féminisme et exception française 1980-2010* (Paris: Syllepse); Boggio Éwanjé-Épée, Félix & Magliani-Belkacem, Stella (2012), *Les féministes blanches et l'empire* (Paris: la Fabrique). See also the charter of the Collectif des Féministes pour l'Égalité (CFPE), retrieved at: <http://feministegalite.canalblog.com/>

Identity (2007-2010) did nothing to tone down.¹⁸ While retracing all the steps would lead far beyond the scope of our research, a number of events in the last decade have contributed to active escalation in the stigmatisation of Muslim women wearing the hijab. Most notably, two laws voted in parliament only fuelled and entrenched political polarisation on this question: the 2004 '*loi sur les signes religieux dans les écoles publiques*', which on paper was introduced as a necessary reassessment of the 1905 law (law of separation of Church and state) for its specific implementation in the school setting; and the 2010 '*Loi interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public*', advertised by the media as 'anti-burqa law'.¹⁹

Political struggles for equality in postcolonial France

In the end, the hijab question has become willy-nilly an essential faultline of French contemporary debates and within this framework of stigmatisation, it stands as the most evident sign of the inescapable turn towards a cultural polarisation of society along postcolonial lines. As suggested above, the political responses on behalf of postcolonial communities to these systematic attacks have been multiple, multifarious and in most cases disseminated in time (short-term) or space (localised). While over the last decade, a majority of those initiatives faced the silence, denial and dismissal on behalf of mainstream media trying to permanently delegitimise them, the breakthrough managed by the Indigènes de la République in 2005 established the foundations of the final public coming to the fore of the long ignored and denied postcolonial question. Elaborated in 2004-2005 in reaction to the public debates around a law aiming at reinstating the positive role of French colonisation (*Loi du 23 février 2005*), the *Appel du Mouvement des Indigènes de la République* (MIR) launched a political, public debate around the notion of postcolonial in contemporary France. Written in February 2005, the *Appel* features anti-discriminatory demands of equality, citizenship and more fundamentally, collective dignity and the right to existence. For the MIR this amounts to the essential demand of *political existence*:

Discriminés à l'embauche, au logement, à la santé, à l'école et aux loisirs, les personnes issues des colonies, anciennes ou actuelles, et de l'immigration post-coloniale sont les premières victimes de l'exclusion sociale et de la précarisation. Indépendamment de leurs origines effectives, les populations des « quartiers » sont « indigénisées », reléguées aux marges de la société. [...] Les populations issues de la colonisation et de l'immigration sont aussi l'objet de discriminations politiques. Les rares élus sont

¹⁸ See Guénif-Souilamas, Nacira & Macé, Eric (2004), *Les féministes et le garçon arabe* (La Tour-d'Aigues: Editions de l'Aube). The full name of the Ministry set up under Sarkozy is '*Ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Intégration, de l'Identité Nationale et du Développement Solidaire*'. See <http://www.immigration.gouv.fr/>

¹⁹ See Tévanian, Pierre (2012), *Dévoilements. Du hijab à la burqa, les dessous d'une obsession française* (Paris: Libertalia).

généralement cantonnés au rôle de « beur » ou de « black » de service. On refuse le droit de vote à ceux qui ne sont pas « français », en même temps qu'on conteste « l'enracinement » de ceux qui le sont.²⁰

Reversing the stigma by reclaiming the provocative denomination of *indigène*, the MIR denounced discrimination against Black and Arab minorities, generally (at best) identified as *banlieue* second-class citizens relegated to the periphery of the Republic's space, or stigmatised as 'scum' (*racaille*) living in 'lawless areas' (*zones de non-droit*).²¹ This increasingly widespread attitude was most notoriously echoed in the words of Nicolas Sarkozy, particularly when the latter was Minister of the Interior (2004-2007) under the second Chirac presidency. Standing fiercely against this '*lepénisation*' of the minds, and considering the ex-colonial immigrant and postcolonial population as contemporary incarnation of the colonial *indigène* on Republican soil, the MIR's manifesto called for the constitution of an autonomous political space of struggle for equality:

Le traitement des populations issues de la colonisation prolonge, sans s'y réduire, la politique coloniale. Non seulement le principe de l'égalité devant la loi n'est pas respecté mais la loi elle-même n'est pas toujours égale (double peine, application du statut personnel aux femmes d'origine maghrébine, sub-saharienne...). La figure de l'« indigène » continue à hanter l'action politique, administrative et judiciaire ; elle innerve et s'imbrique à d'autres logiques d'oppression, de discrimination et d'exploitation sociales. [...]

La décolonisation de la République reste à l'ordre du jour ! La République de l'Égalité est un mythe. L'État et la société doivent opérer un retour critique radical sur leur passé-présent colonial. Il est temps que la France interroge ses Lumières, que l'universalisme égalitaire, affirmé pendant la Révolution Française, refoule ce nationalisme arc-bouté au « chauvinisme de l'universel », censé « civiliser » sauvages et sauvageons. Il est urgent de promouvoir des mesures radicales de justice et d'égalité qui mettent un terme aux discriminations racistes dans l'accès au travail, au logement, à la culture et à la citoyenneté. Il faut en finir avec les institutions qui ramènent les populations issues de la colonisation à un statut de sous-humanité.²²

Far from emerging out of the blue, the MIR is inscribed in a long history of political struggles for equality and emancipation. Widely ignored by official history, those struggles find their roots in the autonomous movements set up by migrant workers of colonial or ex-colonial background in the 1960s and 1970s and took a new form when they are pursued by their children in the self-organising, anti-racist struggles of the 1980 and 1990s.²³ From *beur* activism in the 1980s to the Motivé-e-s initiative mentioned above, a majority of those

²⁰ See *Appel des Indigènes de la République*, available at:

http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id_article=6&var_recherche=appel

²¹ See Marine Turchi, 'Les mots du FN dans la bouche de l'UMP, l'inventaire', *Médiapart*, 17 November 2011 retrieved at: http://www.mediapart.fr/en-natif/journal/france/161111/les-mots-du-fn-dans-la-bouche-de-lump-linventaire?page_article=2

²² *Appel des Indigènes de la République* (*ibid.*). See also Khiari, Sadri (2006), *Pour une politique de la racaille: immigré-e-s, indigènes et jeunes de banlieues* (Paris: Textuel).

²³ See Boubeker, Ahmed & Hajjat, Abdellali (2008), *Histoire politique des immigrations (post)coloniales: France, 1920-2008* (Paris: Amsterdam).

initiatives have tended to combine, associate, or merge cultural and political expressions into actions of resistance.²⁴

Rock Against Police: the rise of banlieues radical youth cultures in the 1980s

With the blossoming of registered cultural associations in the early 1980s, some of the youth of immigrant background – the so-called ‘second generation immigrants’ – organised autonomously to react to racist crimes, police brutality, repression and more generally against racist stigmatisation. In the long-term, the nonprofit cultural activity taking place within this grassroots networks of ‘*assos*’ became for this generation the main day-to-day device to voice publically a new collective identity and establish on the ground their social and political legitimacy.²⁵

Putting forward grassroots participation to combat the idea of exclusion, the cultural practices developed by this constellation of movements revealed a powerful ability to mobilise youth as well as to create bridges between the first generation of migrants and their children and to generate spaces and tools for the expression of the social exclusion experienced within the ‘host society’. Amongst the politically radical musical and cultural initiatives which had most impact was the Rock Against the Police (RAP) project. In 1980-81, RAP started organising public concerts in the *banlieues* – particularly in the Parisian area but later extended to other French cities such as in Lyon and in the north suburbs of Marseilles. Through their gatherings, RAP allowed the youth from the *banlieues* to reclaim public spaces while providing opportunities for the whole community to gather. Four-page leaflets started being circulated publicising music bands from the *banlieues*, many of which had to resolve to rehearse in basements or staircases, and were thus particularly exposed to police harassment and violence. This tied in with the riots in Les Minguettes (in suburban Lyon), during the summer of 1981, when the youth revolting against police brutality is remembered as the first wave of *banlieues* revolts.

In fact, the 1980s were also the days of public appearance and claim-making by youth from immigrant background and of the emergence and affirmation of a strong anti-racism movement in France. A milestone for a lot of *beur* activists, the 1983 ‘Marche pour l’Egalité

²⁴ Abdallah, Mogniss H. & Réseau No Pasaran (2001), *J’y suis, j’y reste! Les luttes de l’immigration en France depuis les années soixante* (Paris: Réflex); and *Remue-mémoires: petite chronologie des luttes de l’immigration postcoloniale* (Paris: FSQP 2007).

²⁵ See Kadri, Aïssa & Prévost, Gérard (2008), ‘Immigrés’, in Artous, Antoine, Epszajn Didier, & Silberstein, Patrick eds., *La France des années 1968* (Paris: Syllepse), pp 425-440, esp. pp 435-437. Boubeker, Ahmed (2008), ‘Du mouvement beur aux banlieues de l’islam’, in Boubeker & Hajjat (2008), *op. cit*, pp 179-192, esp. pp 188-190.

et contre le Racisme’, a one-month march through France departing from Marseilles with 32 people and gathering nearly 100,000 on its arrival in Paris, is often referred to by many as ‘Marche des Beurs’ (or emblematically, ‘la Marche’).²⁶ The 1983 ‘Marche’ is often construed as the political irruption of the youth from immigrant background – later to be called ‘second generation immigrants’ – on the public scene and the first affirmation of a strong anti-racism movement in France. These were decisive moments in the struggle of young people of immigrant background to be involved in the political life of the country and to demand equal rights. The emergence of this new, independent movement in French political life laid down the terms of their struggle for justice and equality in a fashion still of relevance nowadays for the postcolonial generation. Recent political initiatives on the local scale (Motivé-e-s electoral participation in Toulouse 2001-2008) or at a more national level (the series of Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires launched in 2007) are the direct inheritors of these experiences from the 1980s.²⁷

The following year, the initiative Convergence ’84, aimed to build on the foundational momentum of La Marche, was a step towards the launch in 1985 of the PS-funded movement SOS Racisme. Yet for many, the yellow hand symbol of solidarity ‘*Touche pas à mon pote*’ became the symbol of instrumentalisation or betrayal, mapping durably the fault lines of politicisation for the postcolonial generation. Undermining the radical character of its politics, which lay first and foremost in the autonomy of organisation, the disagreement between the democratic left and a significant section of *banlieues* autonomous activists turned into an irremediable gap, generating a sturdy and resilient suspicion, still very much at play in the current context, towards political institutions – and in some cases any form of political organisation at all – on behalf of *banlieues* youth. This is a significant factor, partly accounting for the marginal politicisation of *banlieues* youth today, usually presented in simplistic terms as political apathy or community withdrawal (*communautarisme*). This is why from the mid-1980s, radical expressions of discontent continued to invest or create new cultural spaces, a political statement to re-assert autonomy of expression and organisation. It is in this context that in the mid to late 1980s, hip hop emerges as a major instance of cultural resistance. Practised consciously or indirectly as a form of countercultural critique from its inception, the massive rise of hip hop in the late 1980s and mid 1990s is central to generate a

²⁶ See Bouamama, Saïd (1994), *Dix ans de marche des Beurs: Chronique d'un mouvement avorté* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer) ; Boubeker & Hajjat eds. (2008), *op. cit.*, section 3 ‘Les enfants de banlieues’, pp 175-232.

²⁷ See <http://fsqp.fr/>

lot of the material this research focuses on, namely a niche countercultural scene made up of critical musical expressions in postcolonial France.

Hip hop resistance as radical countercultural critique in postcolonial France: essentialisation, censorship and repression

The strong correlation described above between ethnic and socio-economic marginalisation of the postcolonial generation in the *banlieues* produces a concentration of different forms of violence: state repression through police brutality; economic violence, generating a degradation of social welfare; the latter two being almost *systematically* articulated to a form of *symbolic violence* that operates at the ideological level, with institutionalised racism.²⁸ In that sense, despite (or partly because of ?) significant instances of active political mobilisation of migrant workers communities in the 1960s and 1970s that were violently repressed by state institutions, in the 1980s collective radical expression shifts towards a more *cultural* turn.

In that respect, the claimed and conscious incorporation of US early hip hop culture to the indigenous aesthetic forms and local socio-economic developments of postcolonial France is one of the most visible instances of cultural resistance – to such an extent that it comes to politically symbolise the postcolonial condition before being gradually turned into a commodified cliché. Logically deriving from this observation, a distinction may then be drawn between the intentions of the artist within their work and their political activism outside of it. This is often used to conflate art and activism, an interpretative projection particularly prevalent in mainstream media. The media tends to isolate specific instances of cultural resistance, transforming them into general countercultural icons emblematic of certain sub-cultures, hence overshadowing the scope, complexity and diversity of those cultural practices. For instance, the 1995 ‘Qu’est ce qu’on attend?’ was not a literal call to set fire to everything, but primarily a symbolic realisation (*prise de conscience*) of social conditions.²⁹ This distinction was predominantly denied, an example of the way in which official channels that mediate reception assimilate an aesthetic discourse on social conditions into a literal discourse, thereby conflating a realist aesthetic with social reality. The treatment of French hip hop is the clearest manifestation of this tendency towards essentialisation –

²⁸ I am borrowing here the Bourdieusian notion of symbolic violence developed in *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge : Polity Press, 1990), as shall be extensively developed *supra*.

²⁹ ‘Qu’est ce qu’on attend?’ is a song by NTM released in 1995 on their third and probably most popular album *Paris sous les bombes* (Epic, 1995). The chorus repeats: ‘*Mais qu’est-ce qu’on attend pour foutre le feu?*’ (why are we waiting to set the fire ?). Further lyrics and translation available at: http://riotsfrance.ssrc.org/Silverstein_Tertreault/

rappers have often been discursively positioned as ‘ambassadors’ of the *banlieues*. In televised debates, they are often invited to talk on behalf of their class peers, whom they are thought to *represent*. The sub-culture becomes a metonymy for a whole social layer, especially for areas of social exclusion, hence equating political activist discourse and discursive artistic practice.

This may also explain why the history of French hip hop has famously been punctuated with instances of libel trials against rappers, intimating a direct correlation between social production and the symbolic production of resistance. This has notoriously been the case in the 1990s for the hip hop collectives NTM and Ministère A.M.E.R. when in 1996, Ministère A.M.E.R. were prosecuted by the Ministry of the Interior Charles Pasqua for their song ‘Sacrifice de poulets’ deemed as an offence to the French police, and fined 250,000 FF. Investigated for their song ‘Police’ in 1993, NTM made a virulent anti-police statement while introducing the same song at an anti-racist benefit gig organised by SOS Racisme against the election of a FN mayor in Toulon on 14th July 1995, and after a long trial were sentenced in 1997 to a two month prison term and fined 50,000 FF.

More recently, institutionalised censorship still hits rappers as the examples of La Rumeur and ZEP narrated above illustrate, particularly when the latter offer a political, subversive view of the world around them or feel generally inscribed in a practice of ‘*rap conscient*’ as a form of critique. Whilst rappers like the collective Sniper, prosecuted for their song ‘La France’ in 2003, or Monsieur R, prosecuted for his song ‘FranSSe’ in 2004, have had to tackle censorship for denouncing national disaffiliation, the most spectacular form of censorship and judicial harassment remains the case of La Rumeur.³⁰ Further illustration of the disproportionate censorship of rap came in the aftermath of the November 2005 revolts, when the UMP deputy for Moselle François Grosdidier attempted to prosecute seven rappers whom he considered dangerous for the Republic because their lyrics represented an ‘incitation to racism and hatred’.³¹

³⁰ On La Rumeur, see above and below. On Sniper, who was also accused of anti-Semitism, see: http://www.humanite.fr/2003-11-11_Societe_-Affaire-Sniper-La-mauvaise-cible-de-Sarkozy.

³¹ Those seven rappers or rap collectives were Monsieur R, Smala, 113, Fabe, Salif, and the already dissolved, no longer active collectives Lunatic and Ministère A.M.E.R. Stated as inadmissible by the Ministry of Justice, the complaint had to be dropped by the deputy. See http://www.humanite.fr/2005-11-30_Societe-Rap-la-reponse-aux-censeurs.

2. Analysis: drafting our research project

As a privileged vehicle for expressing the protean diversity of resistance without endangering the consistency of its politics, culture (and activist culture even more so) stands as a core foundation of struggle and the hidden arena of contestation. Yet the pivotal political role culture may play in the age of globalisation has tended to be overlooked by recent academic research on contemporary social movements in France. And conversely, postcolonial communities have been overwhelmingly essentialised by a series of dominant narratives reducing them either to their social condition or their cultural dimension, ignoring or denying their political legitimacy. While culture and politics have been argued to be articulated together in the expression of new forms of resistance, the cultural dimension of resistance should not be dismissed or interpreted in normative terms to enforce further intellectual stigmatisation, assuming the simple and permanent primacy of politics over culture. The sheer lack of political representation and gap between institutions and civil society should suffice to understand that the terms of the debate are not so clearly and statically articulated. On the contrary, our thesis shall strive to develop an emancipatory and dynamic reading of culture and construe it as a fertile terrain for reconfiguration of activism in postcolonial France. Numerous monographs, articulated around studies of specific social movements, cultural trends or genres, have undertaken to partially analyse this ‘culturalist’ evolution of politics. And yet the study of the broader dynamic remains an overwhelmingly underexplored area of scholarly research – a hiatus which this thesis will undertake to bridge.

Conceptual orientations & outlook on the academic and intellectual context in France

I have relied on four main areas of research on France, drawing essentially by French scholarship, when drafting and locating my research project:

(i) Studies in political science and social movements theory detailing the ethos of specific instances of the *altermondialiste* movements taken in their cultural context.³² Mapping out the constellation of networks involved in contemporary forms of social contestation, this area of research will be useful to us to locate our musical expressions in

³² See Agrikoliansky, Eric, Fillieule, Olivier & Mayer, Nona eds. (2005), *L’altermondialisme en France: la longue histoire d’une nouvelle cause* (Paris: Flammarion); Bonfiglioli, Chiara & Budgen, Sebastian (2006), *La planète altermondialiste* (Paris: Textuel); Mathieu, Lilian (2004), *Comment lutter? Sociologie des mouvements sociaux* (Paris: Textuel). See also case study research such as Tilouch H. (2002), *Les nouvelles formes d’action collective dans le champ politique: le cas des Motivé-e-s à Toulouse*. Research thesis. (Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Lyon).

their political context and assess the shortcomings of the latter on behalf of grassroots cultural activists.

(ii) Studies in urban sociology about the context of the *banlieues*, particularly analysed in terms of prospect for the youth. In that respect, the classic analyses of riots by Beaud & Pialoux and Muchielli and the comparative work of Wacquant on US and French urban ghettos, have been quite influential in shaping a thorough understanding of the social fracture at play in the *quartiers*, most visible in times of revolt.³³ Studies by Maurin or Masclet also provide a good analysis of the fragmented responses creating a gap between a reconfigured avatar of the *lumpen* in the *cités* and the organised radical left.³⁴ The taboo of race emerges on the same theme in the analyses of Fassin or Lévy.³⁵ A cultural variant of this field also includes a whole literature on the relationship between the state and the grassroots via cultural practice – examining the constellation of nonprofit associations, their relation to the state and their social impact on *banlieues* community.³⁶

(iii) Studies in cultural studies, anthropology and ethnomusicology of cultural movements (such as the Creole cultural movement), or of sub-cultures (predominantly French hip hop) placed in their social context.³⁷

To this must also be added all the work of historians of protest music in France. The accounts of Deshayes & Grimaud or Rémi Pépin provide significant benchmarks and guidelines to locate the socio-cultural background against which musical expressions of resistance have developed over the last three decades.³⁸ Another more academic host of

³³ See Beaud, Stéphane & Pialoux, Michel (2003), *Violences urbaines, violence sociale: genèse des nouvelles classes dangereuses* (Paris: Fayard) ; Muchielli, L. & Le Goaziou, V. eds. (2007), *Quand les banlieues brûlent: retour sur les émeutes de novembre 2005* (Paris: La Découverte) ; Wacquant, L. (2008) *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Cambridge: Polity Press). See also Lagrange, Hugues & Oberti, Marco eds. (2006), *Emeutes urbaines et protestations: une singularité française* (Paris: FNSP).

³⁴ Maurin, Eric (2004), *Le ghetto français: enquête sur le séparatisme social* (Paris: Seuil/ La République des Idées) ; Masclet, O. (2003), *La gauche et les cités: enquête sur un rendez-vous manqué* (Paris: La Dispute).

³⁵ Fassin, Eric & Fassin, Didier eds. (2006), *De la question sociale à la question raciale: représenter la société française* (Paris: La Découverte) ; Lévy, Laurent (2010), *op. cit.*

³⁶ Faure, S. & Garcia, M.-C. (2005), *Culture hip-hop, jeunes des cités, et politiques publiques* (Paris: La Dispute); Laville, Jean-Louis. (2010), *Politique de l'association* (Paris: Seuil).

³⁷ This trait of scholarship can be found in a selection of articles on different musical sub-cultures (rap, dancehall) and politics in Raibaud, Yves ed. (2008), *Géographie, musique et postcolonialisme*, Copyright Volume! Vol. 6. 1/2, September 2008 (Paris : Mélanie Séteun). See also Berrian, B. F. (2000), *Awakening Spaces: French Caribbean Popular Songs, Music and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press);

³⁸ Deshayes, Eric & Grimaud, Dominique (2008), *L'underground musical en France* (Marseille: Le mot et le reste) ; Pépin, Rémi (2007), *Rebelles: Une histoire du rock alternatif* (Paris: Hugo et Cie). See also Seca, Jean-Marie (2001), *Les musiciens underground* (Paris: PUF).

studies about musical resistance, have been deemed particularly useful to conceptualise our object of research. In that sense, the contributions of French cultural sociology scholars specialised in contemporary, popular forms of protest music have been particularly enlightening. The analyses of Brandl, Guibert, Jouvenet, Le Guern, Pecqueux, or Seca, have all been shaping the approach taken to conceptualise the profusion and diversity of miscellaneous data provided by the different artists and musicians met during the phase of empirical investigation.³⁹

Hip hop takes up a prominent, or at least a special place in the literature of protest music and musical resistance. Cachin, Bazin and Lapassade provide a compelling narrative of the birth of French hip hop, precious mines of information to retrace the genealogy of hip hop in France, map out its evolution and the different directions it could take.⁴⁰ The analyses of Hanak & Blondeau or Molinero are also valuable contributions for drafting a research project and better understand the protest dynamic underlying certain forms of hip hop (especially *rap conscient*), the ‘cultural loudspeaker’ used to voice *banlieue* youth discontents.⁴¹

In an overwhelming majority of cases, those studies of musical resistance by academic scholarship are genre specific and/or subculture specific. Against this form of intellectual ghettoisation, our interdisciplinary research project will strive to draw together and compare different genres, styles and traditions of musical resistance, to better conceptualise the overarching dynamic of resistance and empowerment at play in musical practices in postcolonial France. Whilst taking into account the specific cultural and political local context for the different artists met on the road, our perspective and analytical stance will always strive to establish comparisons in order to map out a common ground between those different practices.

³⁹ See Guibert, G r me (2006), *La production de la culture : le cas des musiques amplifi es en France* (Paris : Irma / M lanie S teun); Jouvenet, Morgan (2006), *Rap, techno,  lectro... le musicien entre travail artistique et critique sociale* (Paris: Maison des Sciences de l’Homme); Perrenoud, Marc ed. (2006), *Terrains de la musique : approches socio-anthropologiques du fait musical contemporain* (Paris: L’Harmattan); Seca, Jean-Marie ed. (2007), *Musiques populaires underground et repr sentations du politique* (Fernelmont: E.M.E); Dauncey, Hugh & Le Guern, Philippe (2008), *St r o : sociologie compar e des musiques populaires France / G.B.* (Bordeaux : M lanie S teun); Brandl, Emmanuel (2009), *L’ambivalence du rock : entre subversion et subvention* (Paris : L’Harmattan).

⁴⁰ Bazin, Hugues (2008), *La Culture hip hop* (Paris: Descl e De Brouwer); Cachin, Olivier (1996), *L’offensive rap* (Paris: Gallimard); Lapassade, Georges & Rousselot, Philippe (2000), *Le rap ou la fureur de dire* (Paris: Loris Talmart).

⁴¹ Hanak, Fred & Blondeau, Thomas (2007), *Combat Rap II: 25 Ans de hip-hop* (Bordeaux: Le Castor Astral); Molinero, St phane (2009), *Les publics du rap* (Paris: L’Harmattan). See also Guibert, G r me & Parent, Emmanuel eds. (2004), *Sonorit s du hip-hop: logiques globales et hexagonales*, Copyright Volume! Vol. 3.2, March 2005 (Paris : M lanie S teun).

(iv) Lastly, albeit still at the fringes of academia, studies adapting postcolonial history and theory to the French context are also steadily putting together a compelling field of contemporary research offering new readings of French politics and society.

Here it is crucial to note the specificity of the French context affecting the still underdeveloped emergence of postcolonialism in the realm of academia and mainstream intellectual spheres. In contrast with the Anglo-Saxon world, where postcolonial studies are rather well established as an academic branch and the legitimacy of postcolonial theory can hardly be denied in intellectual debates, in France, postcolonialism is still considered an illegitimate analytical framework, or at least regarded with suspicion by the overwhelming majority of academic circles. Against the hostile backdrop of an ideological assault featuring the implementation of an aggressive form of secularism, the mythical construct of national identity denying the very existence of ethnicity and difference, and the dismissal or underestimation of the plight of colonisation, the concept of race is repressed as a taboo and the postcolonial paradigm discarded as inaccurate or illegitimate by French mainstream scholarship.⁴² Thus, the intellectual advocates of postcolonialism in France are caught in an ideological battle to establish their analyses not just as legitimate in the academia, but also to assert the postcolonial paradigm as an essential and most pertinent framework for construing some of the contemporary developments in French politics and society.⁴³ In that respect, contemporary French authors – historians, sociologists and political theorists alike – who have tried to conceptualise postcolonialism to find its French application are already involved in an intellectual form of cultural resistance.

Following the footsteps of Saïd, Fanon or Sayad, and renewing the figure of the militant intellectual (*intellectuel engagé*) a significant minority of sociologists, historians and political theorists have been, over the last decade, steadily instituting a sphere of debates, featuring the militant scholars already mentioned above (Bouamama, Boubeker, Guénif-Souilamas, Hajjat).⁴⁴ To this social history and sociology scholarship can be added insightful

⁴² See Bouamama, Saïd (2010), *Les discriminations racistes : une arme de division massive* (Paris, L'Harmattan); Bouamama, S. (2010), 'Les quartiers populaires de type grand ensemble : des gentils "beurs" à la méchante "racaille"', in *Culture et Société*, n° 15, Summer 2010 ; Bouamama, S. (2009), *Les classes et quartiers populaires. Paupérisation, ethnicisation et discrimination* (Paris : Éditions du Cygne); Bouamama, Saïd, Cormont Jessy, & Fotia, Yvon (2010), *Les discriminations multifactorielles, genre/« race »/classe. Repères pour comprendre et agir* (Paris, Acsé).

⁴³ See 'Postcolonialisme et immigration', in *Contretemps* 16, Spring 2006 (Paris: Textuel), pp 15-132

⁴⁴ See Hajjat, Abdellali (2005), *Immigration postcoloniale et mémoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan). Abdallah (2001), *op. cit.*; Bouamama (1994), *op. cit.* ; Boubeker & Hajjat (2008), *op. cit.* ; Guénif-Souilamas (2006), *op. cit.* ; Guénif-Souilamas & Macé (2004), *op. cit.*

analyses of colonial history and legacy in French culture and society, notably in the work of Bancel and Blanchard.⁴⁵ Alongside the analyses put forward by a more directly militant set of pamphleteers – such as Khiari and Bouteldja, lead figures of the Indigènes de la République positioned as avatars of the organic intellectuals for the postcolonial – the work of those academics undertakes different analyses presenting different aspects of postcolonial history and theory applied to the specific context of France.⁴⁶

The research project

In the end, this thesis undertakes an analysis of the inter-penetration between some contemporary musical forms and political resistance to neoliberalism, inscribed in a more global logic of cultural resistance to domination and oppression. One of its main purposes is to address the reasons why and the extent to which political resistance in contemporary France has taken an almost irremediable cultural turn. It presents a study of the dynamic of symbolic power at stake in the emergence of a counterculture of resistance. The underlying concern of this project lies in identifying the extent to which musical practice is a particularly relevant form of political appropriation, or of *re*-appropriation of social identities, especially in areas of exclusion wherein the latter are very often denied or stigmatised, or at least generally essentialised by a variety of dominant narratives and discourses. Thus, it explores musical practices of resistance to neoliberal domination in socially marginalised areas of France, often associated with postcolonial communities. The aim is to better understand the kind of impact musical resistance has in the shaping of social identities in postcolonial France through their relation to political activism.

Politics and resistance in musical practice

Before establishing broad guidelines for an analysis, a few observations need to be made on the use of terminology, particularly the concept of resistance. This is envisaged here as the musical practice of resistance vis-à-vis culture and more broadly, as the relation between musical (or cultural) resistance and political commitment.

⁴⁵ Blanchard, Pascal, Bancel, Nicolas & Lemaire, Sandrine (2005), *La fracture coloniale: la société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial* (Paris: la Découverte); Bancel, Nicolas & Blanchard, Pascal eds. (2008), *Culture post-coloniale, 1961-2006: traces et mémoires coloniales en France* (Paris: Autrement); Bancel, Nicolas ; Bernault, Florence ; Blanchard Pascal ; Boubeker, Ahmed ; Mbembe, Achille ; Vergès, Françoise (2010), *Ruptures postcoloniales* (Paris: La Découverte).

⁴⁶ See Bouteldja, Houria (2006), 'Féminisme et antiracisme', in *Contretemps* 16, *ibid.*, pp 86-95 ; Khiari (2006), *op. cit.*;

Politics as a form of resistance can be interpreted in a large number of ways, especially through the notions that are derived from it: *political resistance*, *political commitment* and *activism*. In truth, political commitment remains an ambiguous concept, particularly in relation to artistic practices. It does not account for crucial discrepancies: between commitment and interpretation; between commitment and intention; and between the artistic practice of resistance and the political activism deriving from it. There is an undeniable gap between the political prescriptions made by the artists and the concrete effects of mobilisation in political activism. Not everyone in the audience of activist musicians is or will become an activist, or fully identify with the politics prescribed and the ideological positions conveyed by the work. In that respect, hearing denunciations of injustices may be a sufficient form of mediated political ‘involvement’. Paradoxically, this can also demobilise political resistance insofar as the emergence of a symbolic space of resistance may partially fulfil the motivation for activist mobilisation, almost by proxy. All the same, the musical expressions examined in this thesis play an undeniable role in crystallising social collective representations, political discontents and imagining alternatives. If activists identify with those expressions to a varying degree, the artistic productions and performances are usually construed as symbols of political discontent and function as helpful emblems meant to capture the essence of protest and to universalise it, notwithstanding the intentions of artists. Yet as Carlet and Seca’s analysis of *Live Aid* shows, this process involves an appropriation of symbols that transform countercultural productions into a site of symbolic power.⁴⁷

Artistic resistance, political commitment and activism can take many forms. Both art and politics may be regarded as interfaces *par excellence* of an encounter between the individual and the collective, always embodying an element of public discourse. In this respect, political commitment in art is an ambiguous concept, insofar as it merges the private and the public, yet the individual, private and political commitment of artists needs to be separated from their works received by an audience. In other words, political commitment can be dissociated from political activism and artists construed as privileged observers with a certain *Weltanschauung*. The radical and unambiguously militant political character of the artistic discourse in lyrics, interviews or public interventions, that may be read as very militant (e.g., La Rumeur, as will be discussed later), does not necessarily mean that the individual members of the artistic collective engage on a daily basis in activist politics. Conversely, artists can be individually involved in activist politics, yet not necessarily refer

⁴⁷ Carlet, Yasmine & Seca, Jean-Marie (2007), ‘Vingt ans de *Live Aid* : le *charity rock* a-t-il transformé l’engagement politique en musique populaire ?’, in J.M. Seca ed., *op. cit.*, pp 41-55.

to it explicitly in their public discourse, but rather let private individual commitment shape their general artistic approach.

The radical character of cultural resistance

The notion of *cultural resistance* calls for a pluralistic interpretation. A consistent aspiration to autonomy in countercultural practices can be construed in relative or absolute terms: schematically, this means cultural resistance encompasses a spectrum of radicalisation that ranges from a reformist ideal of appeal to authorities to a more radical rhetoric of systemic opposition.

In our exploration of music and politics in postcolonial France, we will resort to Stephen Duncombe's proposed definition to envisage cultural resistance: 'Cultural resistance is the practice of using meanings and symbols, that is, culture, to contest and combat a dominant power, often constructing a different vision of the world in the process'.⁴⁸ Retracing a genealogy of the concept, from Matthew Arnold to Tom Frank via Gramsci and the Birmingham School, he posits cultural resistance as an active critique of society via a daily cultural practice. As the case of *rap conscient* already mentioned above illustrates easily for the French postcolonial context, we will understand cultural resistance broadly as critical theory put into the practice of everyday life. To Horkheimer, critical theory is 'an essential element in the historical effort to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers of men [...] Its goal is man's emancipation from slavery'.⁴⁹ While resistance has a definitive meaning, culture on the other hand, transcends the political, economic and social meaning of one's practices. In his theoretical overview of cultural resistance, Duncombe provides a rather concise definition of the notion of cultural resistance, clearly articulating cultural expression to political and socio-economic structures. Thus, *cultural resistance* shall be understood 'to describe culture that is used, *consciously or unconsciously*, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the dominant political, economic and/or social structure' and is for that reason, 'not some specimen, anesthetized, classified, and mounted on a pin, but constitutes a lively, ongoing and sometimes cantankerous debate'.⁵⁰

A new counterculture? Culture, imperialism, resistance in postcolonial France

⁴⁸ Duncombe, Stephen (2007), 'Cultural Resistance', in Ritzer, George ed., *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. (London : Blackwell Publishing). Blackwell Reference Online, retrieved at: http://www.sociologyencyclopedia.com/subscriber/tocnode.html?id=g9781405124331_chunk_g97814051243319_ss1-179

⁴⁹ Horkheimer, Max (2002), *Critical Theory : Selected Essays* (New York : The Continuum), p 246.

⁵⁰ Duncombe, Stephen, ed. (2002), *The Cultural Resistance Reader* (London: Verso), p 5; p 9.

As Saïd already noted in the 1990s, ‘opposition and resistance to imperialism are articulated together on a largely common although disputed terrain provided by culture’, acknowledging the significance of counterculture as a form of cultural re-appropriation against ideological domination.⁵¹ Rooting his critique in a solid belief that the historical experience of imperialism – and more specifically the imperialism of colonial empires – is essential in shaping culture and aesthetic forms, generating an *orientalist* ‘structure of attitude and reference’, Saïd accounts for *empire* making all cultures ‘involved in one another; [...] hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic’.⁵² The scholar stresses the particular relevance of the postcolonial protagonist as a figure prominent to resistance against ‘the paternalistic arrogance of imperialism’, in a process of *cultural decolonization* emerging sporadically in former metropolises of ex-colonial empires:

Culture is never just a matter of ownership of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather, of appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures. This is a universal norm. Who has yet determined how much the domination of others contributed to the enormous wealth of the English and French states? [...] Once again it is culture and cultural effort that presage the course of things to come – well in advance of the cultural politics of the postcolonial period dominated by the U.S., the surviving superpower.⁵³

In that sense, the postcolonial category has arisen as an ideological catalyst of resistance to empire insofar as it enables the merging of historical developments in anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles with their contemporary consequences. But the suppressed figure of the postcolonial is also a reconfiguration of Gramsci’s notion of the *subaltern*, arguably a repressed figure of proletarian hegemony.⁵⁴

This is particularly true of France, where the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial era has generated a transformation of the figure of the subaltern, endowed with a new centrality at the heart of the former colonial metropolis.⁵⁵ As a consequence, culture has become a privileged terrain of resistance for the subversion and decolonisation of this *orientalist* discrete disposition of power. In the end, the subjectivity (postcolonial) from which the cultural resistance (and counterculture) emerge can only be understood if the dialectical antithesis to it (culture) is grasped. Culture, counterculture and cultural resistance can thus be understood in a particular subjectivity as arising out of the social relations that structure them. In this sense, culture or counterculture are no more than social relations

⁵¹ Saïd, Edward (1994), *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage books), p 241.

⁵² Saïd (1994), *ibid.*, p xxiv & xxix.

⁵³ Saïd (1994), *ibid.*, pp 261-262 & 331.

⁵⁴ See Gramsci, Antonio (1971), *Selection from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence & Wishart).

⁵⁵ On this question, see Bancel & Blanchard eds. (2008), *op. cit.* ; Bancel, Bernault, Blanchard, Boubeker, Mbembe & Vergès (2010), *op. cit.*; Boubeker & Hajjat (2008), *op. cit.*

themselves captured at moments of emanation and generalised in the subversive context – culture being hegemonic and cultural resistance (or counterculture) being its antithesis and thus counter-hegemonic. Nevertheless, the grounds from which culture and counterculture emerge are the same. They arise out of the fundamental contradiction implicit in the grounds themselves – in this case, France.

Musical resistance in postcolonial France

All in all, despite its manifestations on the ground in opposition to occurrences of specific forms of stigmatisation, inequalities and marginalisation, the theoretical notion of ‘postcolonial France’ is still a construct in the making. Marginal to the mainstream, the term ‘postcolonial’ remains not very common in France. Denied access to most of the mainstream *intelligentsia*, ignored by political discourse, it is only heard in a minority of militant networks, of intellectual academic and para-academic circles and of countercultural practices. For that reason, the resonance it conveys in French society mainly springs from the use of it that is made culturally, a logical reflection of the social context: essentially a refusal to talk about race or the colonial past and acknowledge the consequences in the present as far as specific forms of racial stigmatisation, social inequalities and cultural discrimination are concerned. But despite its resonance, the postcolonial paradigm does not seem to permeate French academia – or does so only very marginally. Therefore, it finds an outlet to become popularised via the process of cultural resistance, which creates a dynamic and asserts an interstitial space – the fragile, heterodox and highly political space of ‘postcolonial France’. Musical practices are the most active and developed forms of that dynamic of resistance.

While literature usually focuses on the *banlieues* (sociology), on social movements (politics) or on genre-specific cultural movements (cultural studies), this research project will be more specific insofar as the musical forms we are examining here contribute to a process of cultural resistance and elaborate a critique of the myths of integration and identity, in order to trigger a transformation of social relations in contemporary French society. They aim to generate social acknowledgement of the postcolonial paradigm with the ultimate prospect of having a political impact – since as Sayad says, ‘*exister, c’est exister politiquement*’. In that sense, those expressions of cultural resistance are key to French contemporary politics insofar as the postcolonial element could be viewed as the blind spot (*angle mort*) of many French democratic public debates.

3. Outline: planning our enquiry

Thus the general interpretative context on musical resistance in postcolonial France tends towards essentialism, by reducing the understanding of certain practices of political protest to a solely symbolic dimension and, conversely, further stigmatising certain sub-cultures as only and necessarily political, usually by propagating simplistic interpretations of these countercultural practices. Widely circulated stereotypes interpret cultural history by reducing certain specific musical genres to favoured forms of political protest (typically and amongst others: hip hop, punk, or reggae). In contrast, this research project seeks to challenge this kind of reductionism. To avoid the pitfall of solely carrying out discursive analysis, this study is rooted in the musical *practices*. An analysis of lyrics constitutes only part of the enquiry. A broader empirical approach drawing on ethnographic sociology seeks to overcome the limitations of textual interpretation.

Empirical enquiry

Fieldwork was carried out through non-consecutive, extended periods during a total of 21 months in France, from March 2006 to November 2007. We rooted our method of investigation into qualitative ethnography, involving snowballing method of data collection, which was deemed most adequate and somehow the only method applicable to grassroots networks context. In other words, our research project does not aim to present a catalogue of musical resistance available in postcolonial France. Nor does it measure its scope in statistical terms. Rather, it seeks to grasp the significance of this dynamic, resorting to case studies as reference points.

Taking into account the general political, cultural, artistic and intellectual context, fieldwork consisting mainly of three main activities:

- (i) Observation: participatory or not, depending on context and type of experience.
- (ii) Interviews: non-directive, formal, recorded and structured, or informal discussions, depending on format of interview and interview context.
- (iii) Archival research: collection of public or internal documents relative to the case studies or of data relevant for specific contextualisation.

The selection of case studies was operated according to four criteria guiding our choice to compose our final sample:

- (i) Spatial and historical limits: the collectives are contemporary and still active on the French music stage today. The core of musical practice and performances are geographically established in France.
- (ii) Nature of the collective: the collectives should be involved both in musical practice and activism. The activist commitment can willingly assumed but it can also be imposed by external circumstances (repression, censorship). Finally, it can be constructed by the outside (reception, interpretation) for a specific contextual reason which endows the musical practice of the collective with a specifically militant resonance in the surrounding community.
- (iii) Contingent availability of musical production and performance observation: those two criteria were considered crucial and non-negotiable. For all collectives selected, I managed to get a hold of a sample of musical production (via a variety of format: CD, mp3, online streaming) and attend at least one live performance of their music.
- (iv) Limits of technical, empirical contingencies: I assessed that at least two forms of activities should be undertaken during the fieldwork (e.g., archival research and observation, or archival research and interview) to qualify a collective as a case study. A lot of collectives, which for contingent or technical reasons only provided one method of investigation, were thus disqualified from the final sample.

In the end, ten musical collectives, all active in grassroots communities, constitute the empirical base for our investigation: Jolie Môme, Keny Arkana, La Rumeur, MAP, Moleque de Rua, Mouss & Hakim, OPA, Stéréotypes, Tarace Boulba, Voukoum. The specific features and idiosyncrasies of each group will be discussed throughout the thesis. Our selection offers a polymorphic approach to cultural resistance, in terms of music style, geographic origin, economic organisation and relations to political institutions and social contexts. Throughout the fieldwork, the traditional difficulty associated with theorising concrete social realities was particularly acute in postcolonial margins. First, as the multiplicity of languages used in musical productions shall illustrate, cultural practices are complex, fragmented and multidimensional. But the task of translating everyday language used by the people involved in the case studies also poses the problem of appropriation and distortion for the observer. One of the crucial features underlying the dialectic of cultural resistance for the case studies tackled in this research is a strong suspicion on behalf of our subjects towards any form of institutionalisation. To counter their fear of cultural, political or intellectual dispossession by the ruling classes, they have developed a strong aspiration to autonomy.

Sketching our ten case studies

Our final ten case studies are, in alphabetical order:

1. **Jolie Môme** (JM), theatre company and street *chanson* collective;
2. **Keny Arkana** (KA), hip hop collective constituted around the artist Keny Arkana;
3. **La Rumeur** (LR), hip hop collective;
4. **Ministère des Affaires Populaires** (MAP), collective mixing hip hop and *musette* rock;
5. **Moleque de Rua** (MR), collective mixing hip hop, funk, samba; associative network;
6. **Mouss & Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées** (MHOC),
artistic project around the singers Mouss et Hakim (MH), mixing rock, raï and chaâbi;
7. **Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre** (OPA), rock protest song artistic collective;
8. **Stéréotypes** (ST), hip hop collective;
9. **Tarace Boulba** (TB), funk brass band collective and associative network;
10. **Voukoum** (VK), Creole music collective, cultural movement and associative network.

The following pages offer a bit more detail in lieu of introduction to the ten groups which will accompany our research exploration of cultural resistance in postcolonial France.

1. Compagnie Jolie Môme (JM):

Created in 1983 by Michel Roger, Jolie Môme are a theatre company and registered association based in Saint-Denis, featuring 11-18 members (depending on performance). The artistic collective introduces itself in these terms:

La Compagnie Jolie Môme c'est une troupe. Qui joue beaucoup, ses propres pièces ou un répertoire hérité de Brecht, Prévert... Qui chante souvent, sur les scènes comme dans la rue. Qui lutte parfois, pour ses droits ou en soutien aux autres travailleurs. Qui fait vivre un théâtre, La Belle Etoile à Saint-Denis. Qui monte un chapiteau, pour s'implanter quelques semaines dans une région. Jolie Môme c'est encore une association, dont les adhérents constituent autant de relais d'information et de mobilisation.⁵⁶

From their inception, the company's productions have always featured a musical dimension that Roger acknowledged to be '*plus accessible pour le public que le théâtre pur et dur*'.⁵⁷ Since 1996, the company organises an annual meeting of revolutionary choirs, along with *cabarets*, a live musical performance format based on songs adapted or derived from the register of revolutionary tradition. Ever since then, music has been part and parcel of the company's artistic routine and activist activities, featuring Jolie Môme playing side by side with workers on strike, *sans papiers* and a constellation of other campaigns.

⁵⁶ See Jolie Môme website homepage: <http://www.cie-joliemome.org/>

⁵⁷ Quote extracted from press releases collected during fieldwork.

2. Keny Arkana (KA):

This female hip hop artist originating from Marseilles, accompanied on stage by one DJ and one to three musicians (regular but not fixed musicians, performing backing vocals, acoustic guitar, occasionally acoustic percussion), started a solo career in 2003 after seven years experimenting with grassroots collectives on the local Marseilles hip hop scene.⁵⁸ The hip hop artist stands out on the French hip hop scene for the sheer fact that she is female in a subculture still dominated by males, but also for the radical political positions she takes in her songs, interviews and other discourses. Outside the strict scene of French hip hop, she has gained a reputation for setting up, partially as a radical *altermondialiste* response to the November 2005 riots, a collective called La Rage du Peuple (LRDP), giving rise to her political-artistic manifesto and most famous song. This development was followed up by an initiative she undertook in 2006-2007 entitled Appel Aux Sans Voix (AASV), a series of itinerant Zapatist-style popular assemblies to replace her music tour, which essentially found affinities with a constellation of local autonomous activist groups across France and beyond.

3. La Rumeur (LR):

Founded in 1995 and featuring two DJs (Kool M and Soul G) and four MCs (Ekoué, Hamé, Philippe and Mourad), this hip-hop collective originates from the lower class *banlieue* of Elancourt, Maurepas (Yvelines) and the peri-urban vicinity of Perpignan (Pyrénées Orientales). The collective is mostly known outside the usual French hip hop circle for two related factors: (i) it is politically very articulate and includes critical positions in its lyrics, interviews and other kind of expression such as short introductions to songs or media interventions – a specific feature of the band which is thought as an exception in terms of reception (particularly in terms of audience); and (ii) the long trial which opposed Mohamed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé) to the Ministry of the Interior – headed by Nicolas Sarkozy at the time the trial was launched – between 2002 and 2010, a case of judicial harassment still unique on such a scale in the history of censorship of French hip hop via the judicial apparatus.

⁵⁸ For the purpose of this research, although Keny Arkana refers initially to a single individual, and the biographical details are only known for this specific person, the term shall be assigned to the deriving *artistic entity*, implying *collective* interaction in artistic activity and a broader social network – though this artistic entity is fluctuant in its composition. Out of all the ten cases studies, Keny Arkana is the only name designating an individual person. Yet this artistic stage name (the real name of Keny Arkana is publicly unknown) not only enables a broader collective to be articulated around an artistic entity, personified around a single individual, but also allows flexibility of the immediate social circle and the easy reconfiguring of its composition while at the same time protecting the identities of the individuals involved. Paradoxically enough, within this logic, the anonymity also enables to focus on the mobile and *collective* aspect of the process.

4. Ministère des Affaires Populaires (MAP):

Set up in 2004 and based in Roubaix, this music collective features two MCs (Saïd a.k.a. Dias; Kaddour, a.k.a. HK), one DJ and drummer (Stanko Fat, electronic beats and drum kit) and two musicians (Hacène Khelifa, violin; Jeoffrey Arnone, accordion). Between 2004 and 2009, the collective became famous for the hundred of live dates they performed, particularly in benefit gigs for a variety of militant campaigns. Since 2010 the collective has decided to go solo. HK has set up the project HK et les Saltimbanques, focusing on a ‘citizen of the world’ (*citoyen du monde*) outlook on the world, while Saïd and the rest of MAP have refocused on more explicitly political questions of postcolonial identity with the project ZEP – Zone d’Expression Populaire. This album, book and collective has regularly been the subject of attacks by far right militants and their major instigators are currently being prosecuted for ‘incitation to discrimination and racial hatred’.

5. Moleque de Rua (MR):

Created in 1983 by José Carlos Gomes Ferreira (a.k.a. Duda) in Vila Santa Catarina, a favela of São Paulo, this Brazilian musical collective also involves a surrounding community network of around 350 members. Now spreading internationally (mostly in Brazil and France), the collective usually features nine to eleven musicians for their live performances.⁵⁹ The collective is famous for creating its own instruments from recycled material found in rubbish dumps and junkyards surrounding the favela, which gave rise to their slogan – ‘*créer c’est résister*’. Inscribed in the neighbourhood from its inception, Moleque has always been conceived as a ‘musical family’ – a formation gathering several generations, rooted into, supported by, and active through the wider local community, second family to many. In that context, the band’s gradual rise to prominence in Vila Santa Catarina and its surroundings during those early years could be construed as an almost natural consequence of their condition of existence and practice.

6. Mouss & Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées (MHOC):

The two brothers Mustapha and Hakim Amokrane, born in Les Minimes, in the North suburb of Toulouse, first got involved in artistic and political practices with the band Zebda. Following the split of Zebda in late 2003,⁶⁰ the two brothers started working independently

⁵⁹ i.e., at time of writing: Duda, Oswaldo Gregório, Abel, Guigui, Heverton, Simone, Marcella, Cassio, all playing different instruments.

⁶⁰ Zebda split from late 2003 until late 2011.

and released their first solo album, *Mouss et Hakim ou le contraire*, in 2005. In 2007, their second album, *Origines Contrôlées*, came out as the product of a collaborative project between the two brothers and seven other musicians. For the purpose of this research, if the benchmarks of Zebda, Motivés and 100% Collègues (other Zebda side projects), may be alluded to, only the *Mouss et Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées* (MHOC) project will be considered fully. A politically and socially engaged group, Zebda had organically come into existence in 1985 as the musical component of a Toulouse militant association, Vitécrici which encouraged youth participation through engaging them in various cultural practices. The emergence of Zebda as a politically and socially engaged musical collective must be replaced in the context of the youth social struggles the 1980s, which from Rock Against the Police (RAP) in 1981 to the 1983 Marche des Beurs, heralded the irruption of so-called ‘second generation immigrants’ – on the public, political scene and the first affirmation of a strong anti-racism movement in France. This form of mobilisation, merging together associative, cultural and political dimensions, is strongly characteristic of Zebda’s, and later Mouss & Hakim’s, principles and practices of social and political action around the key paradigms of justice and equality.

7. Orchestre Poétique d’Avant-Guerre (OPA):

Created in 2004 and based in Bordeaux, this rock protest song collective and informal association features a total of 29 members, with rotational participation to performances. Influenced by the rich French tradition of revolutionary songs, radical poetry or simply *chanson à texte*, the collective merges eclectic rock, reggae and chanson into a contemporary form of rock protest song, proposing unusual, improvised adaptations of texts by Artaud, Aragon and songs by Barbara, Nougaro, Ferré, or even J-B Clément (*la semaine sanglante*), along with creations featuring original lyrics of protest and denunciation of contemporary injustices.⁶¹ One of the most involved members, the singer Myriam (a.k.a. ‘m.’) has also set up the collective *Hacktivismes*, an Internet citizen network of resistance to criminalisation of resistance, state surveillance and its increasing security policies, along with the collective C.L.A.P 33 (*collectif bordelais Contre Les Abus Policiers*). She was also involved in the Appel Aux Sans Voix initiative launched by Keny Arkana and La Rage Du Peuple.

⁶¹ Like Jolie Môme, OPA proposed a cover of the song *la semaine sanglante*, in a very different version than the theatre company, more infused by reggae rhythms and rock sounds.

8. Stéréotypes (ST):

Set up in 1996 and based in Toulouse, this hip hop collective features three MCs (Konic, Mista, Keys) and four DJs / musicians (Dayon, base; Nico, drums; Sweet Ohms, samples; DJ Slices, turntables). Of essentially local scope and outreach, it also runs socio-cultural animation (SCA) activities via the registered association KMK (KonicMistaKeys, derived from the names of the three MCs), created in 1998. The name Stéréotypes came up in 1999 to clearly dissociate the artistic process from the associative dynamic. Anchored in street culture and hip hop tradition, Stéréotypes have developed their own cosmopolitan and eclectic musical identity, incorporating instruments from other musical contexts, such as electric guitar, base and drum kit, denoting the rock influence, or the accordion of Jean-Luc Amnestoy (of the Motivés musical collective). Initially based on an already existing, informal community, the association KMK has taken more formal shape in order to develop and stabilise a cultural network. With its 40 to 50 members, KMK focuses their energy on anti-racist youth projects and initiatives to reclaim hip hop and ‘urban subcultures’ (*sic*) as a legitimate form of expression, especially amongst the disadvantaged youth.

9. Tarace Boulba (TB):

Founded in 1993 by two ex-members of Les Négresses Vertes, this musical collective based in Montreuil is also established locally as a registered association (Rasta Baboul) with a 750-strong membership. The collective, a funk brass band, features 20 to 50 members on stage. Rooted mainly in funk, but also interested in brass instruments, the two musicians sparked off a brass band of about 20 people reclaiming a funk heritage. The collective have gained a local reputation which reaches beyond the strict boundaries of street culture and world music for their unique practice of cultural collectivism. They offer weekly rehearsal workshops open to all, and *scènes tournantes*, flexible performances where musicians can rotate and easily jump in. They also organised weeks-long collective tours in Western Africa (Mali, Burkina Faso) in 2003 to exchange with musicians and local communities, and in the USA in 2009 to explore the roots of funk music. The self-defined *raison d’être* of the association is ‘free accessibility to music for ALL’.⁶² The notions of *collectivité*, *ouverture* and *métissage* are the three key tenets underlying this ‘*auberge espagnole version musique [où] la mixité et le mélange servent de ciment au relationnel*’.⁶³

⁶² From back cover of *Merci pour le tiep* LP (Formidable/Fairplay, 2006).

⁶³ Taken from *Tarace Boulba: présentation*, internal documents collected during fieldwork.

10. Voukoum (VK):

Created in 1989 and rooted in Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe, this registered association and cultural movement (*Mouvman Kiltirel Gwadeloup*) gathers around 350 members. It typically features 15 to 20 performers on stage and more during the *déboulés* (*défilé*, street parade in Guadeloupian Creole). During the carnival *déboulé*, the usual configuration of the collective is around 50 musicians, six percussion masters, along with two cooks. The meaning of *Voukoum* – a Creole term meaning ‘uproar, hullabaloo, racket, commotion’⁶⁴ – summarises the principle of reversal order underlying the collective’s ethos in order to preserve, promote and renew *Gwadeloup*’s Creole popular culture. Opting for a strategy of collective protest identity, Voukoum undertakes to revisit, assert and revive the cultural heritage of Guadeloupe, which in their eyes have been repressed by the culture and codes imposed by the slave masters, later to become the colonial dominance of the *métropole*. In practice, since their inception, the most intense activity of the collective during the year revolves around the time of *Mas* (carnival), when they reclaim the African tradition of the mask while investing the street along with other *Mas* collectives.

Musical practice as the interstitial space of resistance in postcolonial France

Equipped with elements of context, analysis and a host of case studies, we can now outline our research exploration of musical resistance in postcolonial France.⁶⁵ The guiding thread of our analysis lies in understanding the dynamic of resistance and re-appropriation at play in those musical practices, and the different impacts it may infer. To address this question, we will begin by looking at theories which attempt to make sense of the role of culture and its relation to power, economics and state institutions (Chapters I and II). Having established that cultural production is inextricably embedded in a web of social relationships which shape and are shaped by it, we will then turn to the specific material context in which this new musical production has arisen in France (Chapter III). This means identifying the different features and series of social and political questions it has raised, notably the particular, idiosyncratic problematic of the *banlieues*.

⁶⁴ Adapted from the *Dictionnaire Créole-Français* by Hector Poulet, Sylviane Telchid and Daniel Montbrand. Cited in *Voukoum, dossier de presse 2006*, internal archives collected during field work.

⁶⁵ See Appendix 3 for a list of the empirical activities undertaken. See Appendix 4 for a recap table of the different contextual settings and parameters for the ten final case studies.

Of course, this question is not new and there is a vast amount of literature on cultural production and on the situation in the *banlieues*.⁶⁶ However, whilst this study does not seek to provide an all-encompassing account of the antinomies between the state and postcolonial communities underlying what is happening in the *banlieues*, it is considerably informed by them. A non-negligible part of scholarship encountered during the investigation offered thorough studies privileging one of the terms of this structural antinomy, mostly in the field of political or social theory on the one hand, and research in anthropology or ethnomusicology on the other hand. In contrast to these rather simplified accounts, the picture that emerged from our analysis is much more nuanced and complex, addressing the relationship between lived experience and more abstract political analysis (Chapter IV). While, from this perspective, symbolic resistance appears to be binary and linear, in fact it entails engagement of individuals in often chaotic circumstances grappling with questions which are quasi-taboo in France, such as race, ethnicity and postcolonial identity, the blind spot of political debates. Thus, the disillusionment with mainstream politics and widespread abstention from its institutions amongst the lower classes in France is a reflection of this political reconfiguration. Against the essentialised and aestheticised conception of postcolonialism, we will keep our focus on the material conditions shaping musical resistance. Our collectives paint a picture of poverty and racism in the *banlieues* that is neither idealised nor fetishised (Chapter V). They employ a range of strategies, from musical performance to inspiring discourses, as expressions of symbolic resistance, reflecting a common quest for social recognition, collective dignity and an autonomous, authentic voice for postcolonial communities.

Ultimately, a number of constraints dilute, distort and shape the resistance in a process of reciprocal relationships of power appropriation (Chapters VI and VII). With the intensification of pressure on our collectives due to an ever-expanding marketisation of cultural industries, and in the context of rampant neoliberalism, the space for resistance becomes difficult to identify. This, in addition to an increasingly repressive state, is a challenge to be met by our musical collectives, who have to generate creativity to conceive of this ‘blind spot’ (*angle mort*) as an interstitial space of resistance.

⁶⁶ See Bancel & Blanchard eds. (2008), *ibid.*; Hargreaves & McKinney eds. (1997), *op. cit.*; Durand, Alain-Philippe (2002), *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture in the Francophone World* (Oxford: Scarecrow Press).

Chapter I.

The politics of musical resistance: cultural appropriation and emancipation

1. Culture as a battlefield of power

- 1.1 Cultural hegemony as class rule, resistance as war of position
- 1.2 Cultural dynamics of power in late capitalism
- 1.3 Cultural resistance, or the cultural dialectics of symbolic violence

2. Power and identity: the ontological grounding of domination

- 2.1 Stigma as discrimination systematized and internalized
- 2.2 The reversal of the stigma as social subversion
- 2.3 Colonized identity as stigma, violence as resistance

3. Resisting (dis)integration: postcolonial cultures, politics of empowerment

- 3.1 The politicisation of release
- 3.2 Integration as postcolonial assimilation
- 3.3 Resisting (dis)integration: cultural appropriation as empowerment

Conclusion. Postcolonial politics as revolutionary Aufhebung

Trop nombreux sont ceux qui ont oublié le passé
L'histoire de l'homme, une honte, faut-il te le ressasser?
Le monde, une spirale où les mêmes erreurs sont retracées
A force de côtoyer l'horreur, nos coeurs sont devenus glacés
Nous parlent que de profits, la condition de l'homme effacée
Mondialisation et concurrence sont leurs uniques phrasés
Les peuples unilatéralement écrasés et la création menacée
Multinationales et croissance ont tracé leurs routes sur nos libertés
Ils ont juré craché que rien n'entravera la leur à l'heure où les dictatures sont cachées
A cause de leurs profits, immédiat l'avenir est gâché
Cette bande d'ingrats ont réduit la planète à un grand marché
La loi des plus riches et beaucoup crèvent avant d'être âgés
Protestations dites criminelles si tu les as outragés
Ils mentent lorsqu'ils disent que le mal-être n'est que passager
Puis s'étonnent quand la nature se rebelle comme un peuple enragé
Ils disent être transparents alors que de sang leurs mains sont tachées
Déconseillent fortement d'avoir des idées trop engagées
Accélération de leur plan depuis que des avions se sont crashés
Et toi, dis-moi dans quel sens au système es-tu attaché?
Ils prêchent le blasphème et la vraie lumière se fait lyncher
Tous nés la corde au cou, dans certains pays elle a lâché
Parlent de justice alors qu'à la racine ils l'ont arrachée
Les plus gros s'engraissent sur la tête de ceux qui n'ont rien à mâcher
Voilà le monde d'aujourd'hui: paraît que leur plan a marché
Nous vantent un progrès technique qui dans le fond a tout saccagé
Parle d'évolution quand notre humanité s'est fait hacher
Notre coeur ne bat plus vraiment et notre inconscient est fâché
Stress, angoisse, cancers, dépressions notre compte est chargé
Mais on ne cherche pas la cause c'est les effets qu'on aimerait chasser
Philosophie fast-food pour que nos consciences soient terrassées
Au nom de la dignité humaine, nous avons dit: « assez ! »
Désobéissance civile !!⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Keny Arkana, 'Désobéissance civile' (*Désobéissance*, 2008).

If any form of politics is found in musical resistance, then it will necessarily be rooted in some form of initial critique. Musical resistance usually promotes ideas of justice, freedom, emancipation and, as is the case above with Keny Arkana advocating civil disobedience, appropriation and empowerment. Part of the ten collectives we will follow throughout the thesis for empirical investigation of musical resistance in postcolonial France, the energetic French female hip hop artist here is not an isolated case, and her aspirations are widely shared by other collectives albeit under different forms and expressions. By and large all our artists aspire to freedom (metaphorical and real), emancipation (symbolic and social) and *autonomy*, a crucial stake around which critical views emerge and politics can take shape. Conveyed by a twofold critique, the musical production of postcolonial France manages to articulate a potential for politics, targeting two main enemies: the music industry on the one hand and the living conditions of postcolonial communities on the other hand. This twin critique rests on a converging aspiration to autonomy vis-à-vis what Marx identifies as the ‘*two poles* of rational co-ordination on a social scale’, namely the capitalist marketplace and society’s overarching mode of organisation, often epitomized by the state. Those two poles of *market* and *organisation* function as the ‘*two class factors* constitutive of class relations in the modern era’. Jacques Bidet stresses the contemporary significance of this ‘bipolar matrix [...] of rational *economic* co-ordination’ as the systemic dual – economic and social – structure of capitalism. He highlights the interdependence and inter-penetration of those two poles:

These two modes of co-ordination are *in conflict* with one another, in the sense that what is constructed in the organisational mode is withdrawn in the market order, and vice versa. But they are, at the same time, *mutually imbricated* in the social whole: while constantly on the labour market, modern workers are organised by the firm, which is an organisation on a market that is itself organised to a considerable extent.⁶⁸

While this mutual imbrication in itself may buttress the project of autonomy as emancipation vis-à-vis the structures that establish capitalist rule, it also means that the process of emancipation can never be exempt from this imbrication, generating contradictions within resistance.

Notwithstanding those contradictions, the two poles market/organisation shall be used to structure the present theoretical discussion on appropriation and resistance in culture – and in musical practices in postcolonial France more specifically. While the following chapter

⁶⁸ Bidet, Jacques (2008), ‘A Key to the *Critical Companion to Contemporary Marxism*’, in Bidet, Jacques & Kouvelakis, Stathis ed., *Critical Companion to Contemporary Marxism* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, Historical Materialism Book Series), pp 3-21; p 9.

(Chapter II) will explore market processes, the present chapter will discuss musical practices from the standpoint of social organisation. We will analyse the link between political hegemony, power, and the hybrid experience of culture in terms of identity, with a particular focus on the postcolonial condition in the context of France and Western cultural imperialism.

Unsurprisingly, the hybrid character of cultural appropriation at a symbolic level is also reflected on a material level. The cumbersome and difficult undertaking of deconstructing and uncovering the ideological roots of political domination in culture has been attempted most consistently by Marxist scholarship, which has conceived different structural tools for this critical task. In that respect, a clearly detectable filiation between Gramsci's notion of hegemony, the materialist approach to culture developed by Birmingham School scholars, and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence bring ideology and domination to the very heart of one's identity, through a process of internalization of power structures. Goffman's development of the notion of stigma, when placed alongside Fanon's analysis of colonial rule, posits social relations of domination as constitutive of one's self-perception to the extent that symbolic violence may be committed at an ontological level, as a systemic experience of stigmatization. More specifically, this process of stigmatization in contemporary France is centrally articulated around the postcolonial figure – whether the term refers to race and cultural origin (typically, stigmatization of Muslims, Black and Arab youth) or class and socio-geographical location (typically, *banlieue* and *cité* stigma).⁶⁹

The following chapter shall examine these processes of ideological domination in culture. Its dynamics will be explored in broad universalistic terms, before moving onto the more specific relevance of the postcolonial category insofar as it significantly modifies the key features and chief characteristics of musical resistance in contemporary France. First, we will examine the analyses of Gramsci, the Birmingham School, Jameson, or Bourdieu to establish a dialectical definition of culture. With this browse of Marxist scholarship on culture, cultural hegemony and symbolic violence become foundational features of this cultural dynamic, and a breeding ground for cultural resistance. As symbolic power, cultural hegemony affects not only social relations, but also individual perception of identity, particularly when the latter is stigmatized. We will discuss Goffman's theory of stigma, and connect to the interpretations of the Gramscian notion of subaltern undertaken by postcolonial thinkers, such as Saïd, Spivak, or the Subaltern Studies Group. Particularly

⁶⁹ See Bancel, Nicolas ; Bernault, Florence ; Blanchard Pascal ; Boubeker Ahmed ; Mbembe, Achille ; Vergès, Françoise (2010), *Ruptures postcoloniales* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010).

relevant for our enquiry of postcolonial communities in contemporary France, postcolonial literature pushes Goffman's concept of stigma further to delineate a hierarchy of the human deprived of agency. Finally, we will move to more specific context, relying on analyses still much overlooked in French academia of postcolonial writers such as Memmi, Fanon, Sayad or Hajjat, to discuss the limits and potential of cultural resistance and delineate a theoretical space for postcolonial politics.

1. Culture as a battlefield of power

When the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO) suspended four musicians ‘for putting their names, and that of their employers, to a letter protesting the appearance of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra’ at the BBC Proms (September 2011), it revived within the British contemporary music a long-standing controversy about the relation between music and politics.⁷⁰ The LPO chief executive justified his decision by asserting that although the LPO ‘*would never restrict the right of its players to express themselves freely*’, the right to freedom of expression had to be waived when it came to politics, insofar as ‘*for the LPO, music and politics do not mix*’.⁷¹

In an eristic Guardian column, classical music critic Tom Service argues that not only is this conception of the severance between music and politics morally dubious, it is also historically inaccurate. He undertakes to prove music and politics have always mixed, providing examples from LPO archives – e.g., of a LPO manager being fired in 1952 for having ‘polemical’ political affiliations, i.e., being a communist. To the Guardian journalist, what could seem like an anecdotal incident is rather a tree that hides a forest, namely, that of the relationship between music and politics:

But the point about all this is [...] a much bigger question about music and politics at stake. You can’t separate the two, and the attempt to try is itself political. To pretend that the performance, reception, and composition of music are activities that exist in a separate realm from the social and political realities of the world is a dangerous, utopian fantasy. If it were true, music (classical music especially) would only ever have the possibility of being an aesthetic entertainment, as opposed to the foment of ideas, emotions, and poetry that it really is.⁷²

Tom Service’s more general analytical stance on the LPO incident is twofold. First, he reminds his readers of the relentless inexorability of *ideology* – with concealed ideology underlying the smokescreen of the ‘no-ideology’ stance. But interestingly enough, he also defends the analytical claim construing music as an embodied cultural practice always located in a specific human and historical context and not a mere elaborate aesthetic game de-territorialised and disjoined from its social environment. In that sense, while music is already intrinsically endowed with social and political grounding in its composition, it becomes more obviously connected to politics at the moment of performance, when it is incarnated as a cultural practice. To support this argument, the Guardian music critic quotes the thoughts on the subject of Dutch contemporary composer Louis Andriessen:

⁷⁰ Service, Tom (2011), ‘But music and politics have always mixed’, *The Guardian* 21 September 2011, retrieved at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/tomserviceblog/2011/sep/21/music-and-politics-must-mix?INTCMP=SRCH>

⁷¹ Comments by LPO chief executive Tim Walker quoted by Tom Service in *ibid.*

⁷² Service (2011), *op. cit.*

Many composers view the act of composing as, somehow, above social conditioning. I contest that. How you arrange your musical material, the techniques you use and the instruments you score for, are largely determined by your own social circumstances and listening experience, and the availability of financial support. I do agree, though, that musical material – pitch, duration and rhythm – are beyond social conditioning: it is found in nature. *However, the moment the musical material is ordered it becomes culture and hence a social entity.*⁷³

An initial point of entry into debating the relation between music and politics, cultural practice constitutes a focal point and a bridge. Yet any theoretical discussion of resistance and re-appropriation within cultural practices would certainly call first and foremost for a clarification of the terms of the discussion. Letting aside the literal, biological uses of the term to focus on its more metonymical, social acceptations, any attempt to put forward a definition for the term *culture* conveys hegemony as its mainspring and inherent dynamic, as has been thoroughly explored and demonstrated by Gramsci.⁷⁴ In that respect the articulation between music and politics is inherent to musical practice insofar as the relation between culture and power is constitutive of the very concept of culture.

Aiming at a theoretical clarification of the terms of our discussion on cultural resistance and re-appropriation, we will now undertake to construct a definition of culture taking into account some Marxist scholarship which shaped our understanding of power appropriation, empowerment, and cultural resistance throughout this research. Exploring the contributions of Gramsci, Jameson, and the Birmingham School, the following section aims to establish a dynamic definition of culture opening a dialectic of resistance to domination beyond Bourdieu's determinist reading of symbolic violence.

1.1 Cultural hegemony as class rule, resistance as war of position

The concept of culture itself has a long and complicated story. The endeavour to pin down a definition of the term has been the subject of manifold debates across the humanities (in history anthropology, sociology) and has become a legitimate debate of its own,⁷⁵ particularly within the Frankfurt School in the 1930s, and the Birmingham School in the 1960s.⁷⁶ In the 1960s and 1970s, Birmingham School scholars' rethinking of culture was derived from their reading of the Frankfurt School and the debates surrounding the

⁷³ Louis Andriessen quoted in Service (2011), *op. cit.*, emphasis on the last sentence mine.

⁷⁴ See Gramsci, Antonio (1971), *Selection from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence & Wishart).

⁷⁵ which could not lend itself to becoming the object of the present analysis. To embark on a discussion of the meaning and history of the term, see for instance the extended definition proposed by *AnthroBase*: <http://www.anthrobase.com/Dic/eng/def/culture.htm>

⁷⁶ See Williams, Raymond (1976), 'Culture', in *Keywords* (London: Croom Helm). A good summary of the essential texts and debates in the Frankfurt School on culture can be found in Arato, Andrew & Gebhardt, Dike (1982) eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Continuum).

foundation of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham.⁷⁷ The CCCS conception of culture aims to put forward a dialectical understanding, rooted in Marx's materialist conception of history and Gramsci's reading of Marx's base-superstructure axiom.⁷⁸

Hegemony as an elaboration on the base-superstructure axiom

In the preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx summarised the base-superstructure axiom in the following terms:

The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. [...] At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or — this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms — with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. [...] The changes in the economic foundation lead, sooner or later, to the transformation of the whole, immense, superstructure. In studying such transformations, it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic, or philosophic — in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. [...] Consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production.⁷⁹

With this axiom, Marx posits a tenet essential to determining the opposition between ideology and consciousness. But through Gramsci's reading of Marx in the 1920s, this opposition became central to the elaboration of a more thorough understanding of culture, a sphere essentially ignored by most Marxist interpretations. More specifically Gramsci viewed Marx's emphasis on exploitation (or 'base') as a fundamental theoretical limitation of historical materialism for the socialist project of proletarian emancipation, since it tends to overlook any form of domination outside the sphere of production itself:

The claim presented as an essential postulate of historical materialism, that every fluctuation of politics and ideology can be presented and expounded as an immediate expression of the structure (i.e. the base), must be contested in theory as primitive infantilism, and combated in practice with the authentic testimony of Marx.⁸⁰

For the Italian political strategist the other dimension essential to the advance of socialist ideas was an understanding of the 'subtle but pervasive forms of ideological control and manipulation that served to perpetuate *all* repressive structures'.⁸¹ Aiming to avoid the pitfall of economic determinism, Gramsci construes superstructure not as a mere reflection of the

⁷⁷ See Kellner, Douglas (2009) 'The Frankfurt School and British Cultural Studies: The Missed Articulation'. Online article retrieved at: http://gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/2009_essays.html

⁷⁸ In 1846, Marx and Engels already established the material basis of culture in *The German Ideology*. See Marx, K. & Engels F. (1998), *The German Ideology*. (New York: Prometheus Books).

⁷⁹ Marx, K. (1977). *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers).

⁸⁰ Gramsci (1971), *ibid.*, p 407.

⁸¹ Boggs, Carl (1976), *Gramsci's Marxism* (London: Pluto Press), p 38.

economic base. In other words, the relationship between base and superstructure must be interpreted in dialectical terms, ‘constantly changing and reciprocal in its historical complexity; politics, ideas, religion and culture may not be autonomous in any “ultimate” sense, but their causal power in any given transitional period could be overriding’.⁸² The notion of hegemony is then employed to conceptualise the reciprocity between base and superstructure in terms of its impact on class relations and political struggle. Gramsci sees two essential

...superstructural “levels: the one that can be called “civil society”, that is an ensemble of organisms commonly called “private”, and that of “political society” or “the State”. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of “hegemony” which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of “direct domination” or command exercised through the State and “juridical” government.⁸³

By hegemony Gramsci meant an ‘organising principle’ to establish ideological penetration throughout civil society. This ‘principle’ is activated via an entire ‘system of values, attitudes, beliefs, morality, etc. that is in one way or another supportive of the established order and the class interests that dominates it [...] diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialization into every area of daily life’.⁸⁴

In the end, the categories proposed by Marx and furthered by Gramsci or other Marxist scholars will be considered quite pertinent as theoretical grounding of our enquiry here. First, Marx’s distinction between market and organisation discussed above establishes two structuring poles for capitalism as two different domains of intervention for the actors involved in resistance and re-appropriation: grappling with power within the market sphere on the one hand, and within the organisation sphere on the other hand. Within the sphere of organisation, the Gramscian distinction between two forms of superstructures – civil society or cultural hegemony, and the State or political society – creates a further divides between on the one hand a political sphere close to State institutions, and on the other hand, a social sphere close to civil society and more loose social networks. In practice, we will resort to this typology in our analysis of musical resistance to establish three different fields of struggle for power appropriation and empowerment. This will lead us to argue that cultural resistance

⁸² Boggs (1976), *ibid.*, pp 36-37.

⁸³ Gramsci (1971), *ibid.*, p 12.

⁸⁴ Boggs (1976), *ibid.*, p 39.

in postcolonial France is essentially articulated through three major spheres, which in practice often interpenetrate each other:⁸⁵

- (i) *The economic sphere*: implying an alternative organisation of cultural production (particularly record production), and involving resistance to market domination in the age of global cultural industries;⁸⁶
- (ii) *the political sphere*: typically involving a variety of political stances to dominant ideological discourses: a) in the lyrics of songs or in public discourse and *verbatim* (interviews, announcements or short speeches during performances, etc), particularly in relation to the state; b) in the case of artists also involved in associative cultural activity, this also involves strategies the artists deploy in their relation to State funding;
- (iii) *the social sphere*: especially visible in aesthetic reception, and often involving a form of resistance to mainstream media (seen as a necessary point of access to civil society), and implying an alternative grassroots conception of society through an unmediated relation to the audience: live performance becomes a device for generating a festive, alternative and more spontaneous sense of collectivity.

Within the last two spheres – social and political, culture comes to play an essential role for establishing ideology at the heart of the dynamic of power struggle. Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony may be used here as another theoretical tool to further conceptualise this systemic form of domination.

Cultural hegemony as systemic domination via ideology

As a totalising *Weltanschauung* permeating the very consciousness of society, hegemony inconspicuously hits the core of the social fabric, using culture as a major vehicle for its designs. With his conception of cultural hegemony, Gramsci expanded further on Marx's notion of superstructure, providing conceptual tools for understanding the mechanism of ideological power at stake in the deployment of cultural practices. According to the Gramscian approach culture plays a crucial role in capitalism as a foundational feature of ideology, the necessary background (or 'superstructure') to the development of the dynamic of economic exploitation and social domination – whether this dynamic is based on class, race, or subaltern identity. But cultural hegemony reaches beyond ideology to posit power relations as inherent to the heart of culture, shaping the very conditions of its

⁸⁵ This typology equally draws on the literature on globalisation, particularly on the distinctions discussed in Held & McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton eds. (1999), *op. cit.* and Tomlinson, John (1999), *Globalization and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity).

⁸⁶ We will further examine this field in Chapter II.

production, determined by material circumstances and social class. This is why the concept of cultural hegemony also refers to ideology in terms of the manufacture of *consent*: ‘The great intellectuals exercise hegemony, which presupposes a certain collaboration, i.e. an active and voluntary (free) consent, i.e. a liberal, democratic regime’.⁸⁷ To Gramsci consent is a device for the ruling class to discreetly impose on the masses a worldview that ultimately benefits their agenda. Cultural hegemony implies that the dominant view is internalised by the masses and naturalised as the norm or status quo beneficial to all. Playing a key role in this process, legislators of the ruling class prepare ‘the “spontaneous” consent of the masses’ who will eventually internalise the norm as universally valid ideology, since they

...must “live” those directives, modifying their own habits, their own will, their own convictions to conform with those directives and with the objectives which they propose to achieve. If everyone is a legislator in the broadest sense of the concept, he continues to be a legislator even if he accepts directives from others – if, as he carries them out, he makes that certain others are carrying them out too; if, having understood their spirit, he propagates them as though making them into rules specifically applicable to limited and definite zones of living.⁸⁸

Thus, cultural hegemony endows the practices of everyday life and collective beliefs with a key role in establishing systems of domination and reproducing ruling class leadership. These notions of consent and hegemony can be useful to understand the overwhelming sense of social inertia and lack of political representation from the standpoint of the lower classes in contemporary France. Cultural hegemony is experienced there as immobility of ideological structures and mainstream discourse held by different agents of the ruling class in France – mainstream media, political or State institutions, civil society official actors, etc – and the difficult task ahead of our artists and cultural collectives as they grapple with this overpowering hegemony and try to establish a cultural space for resistance and empowerment.

War of position, counter-hegemony and cultural resistance

In the end, to overcome the relative failure of economic determinism and resilience of dominant ideology, Gramsci embedded the concept of cultural hegemony in a distinction between ‘war of movement’ and ‘war of position’. A key element to reinvigorate resistance, the notion of ‘war of position’ is the cultural struggle against bourgeois values being presented as natural or normal. To conquer moral and intellectual leadership and pave the way for a successful proletarian insurrection, the masses need to establish an alternative form

⁸⁷ Gramsci (1971), *ibid.*, p 271.

⁸⁸ Gramsci (1971), *ibid.*, p 266.

of hegemony. For the proletariat this ‘war of position’ is a crucial battle in guaranteeing the definite seizing of political power and ultimate overthrow of capitalism:

The superstructures of civil society are like the trench-systems of modern warfare. [...] The war of position demands enormous sacrifices by infinite masses of people. So an unprecedented concentration of hegemony is necessary, and hence a more “interventionist” government, which will take the offensive more openly against oppositionists and organise permanently the “impossibility” of internal disintegration – with controls of every kind, political, administrative, etc., reinforcement of the hegemonic “positions” of a dominant group, etc. [...] In politics, the “war of position”, once won, is decisive definitely.⁸⁹

From the perspective of resistance, to lead the ideological struggle against cultural hegemony and establish counter-hegemonic positions, a crucial role must be devoted to culture, a key device for the collective re-appropriation, seizure and ownership of power.

1.2 Cultural dynamics of power in late capitalism

Thus, the notions of cultural hegemony and war of position can be useful to conceptualise the call to resistance expressed in the music of our bands. This is characteristic of the world of hip hop for instance. The semantic field of weaponry is a commonplace image in hip hop culture, a widespread extended metaphor through which to portray hip hop, and one that is understood almost as an initiatory prerequisite for a lot of rappers. On one of the first songs of her debut studio album Keny Arkana defines her approach to the relationship between her political activism and her musical practice:

Dis-leur que mon rap est un appel à résister
Dis-leur que j'appartiens qu'à mes idées
Irrécupérable c'est plus que décidé.⁹⁰

An assertive gesture of powerful affirmation of her politics via musical expression, many of the pieces released by Keny Arkana feature in places, a fragmentary, incomplete yet nonetheless identifiable contemporary form of artistic *manifesto*. Using art as a last resort to convey a message of resistance, musical expression, and cultural practice more generally, are approached as a political form of class war, ‘war of position’, or more generally as the re-appropriation of cultural hegemony.

Resistance and re-appropriation in culture

Reaching much further than coercion, cultural hegemony is at the core of the logic of power appropriation, on behalf of the ruling class (hegemony), but also on behalf of the masses (war of position). As a dynamic process founded on class struggle and put in motion

⁸⁹ Gramsci (1971), *ibid.*, pp 235-239.

⁹⁰ Keny Arkana, ‘Le missile suit sa lancée’, *Entre Ciment et Belle Etoile* (2006).

by class rule, this conception of power implies that re-appropriation can go both ways. On the one hand, it can take the direction of hegemony, incorporation of consent and co-optation; and on the other hand, it can head towards resistance, war of position, counter-hegemony, and empowerment. Raymond Williams, highly estimated as the founder of cultural materialism, also stressed the significance of culture as an ‘articulation between material production and symbolic systems’.⁹¹ In other words, according to Birmingham School theorists, cultural practice is a battlefield of power rooted in social production. This endows any collective customs, daily life and routine forms of social interaction with the necessary political purport of a dynamic struggle for hegemony. The work of his colleague Stuart Hall, a prominent figure of the CCCS (or ‘Birmingham School’), confirms this type of analysis. He attempted to go beyond Gramsci to define cultural hegemony not merely along the lines of domination but as a dynamic, critical site of social action and intervention, where power relations are both ‘established and potentially unsettled’.⁹² This conception of cultural hegemony will prove useful to our empirical analysis of postcolonial France wherein musical practices are always hybrid and heterodox, making reception and interpretation a key stake for understanding empowerment and appropriation. Thus musical expressions constantly fluctuate between resistance to domination or cooptation by cultural hegemony, or in most cases, manage to convey both aspects of power at the same time.

Cultural hegemony and postmodern incorporation in late capitalism

On the whole, an entire tradition of thinkers building on Marx’s approach to ideology – from Gramsci to Lukács, from Adorno and the Frankfurt School to Raymond Williams and the CCCS – remained rooted in a materialist conception of culture to posit a dialectical definition of culture. Against this materialist approach, the attempt made in the 1950s to capture the essence of culture into a single definition by Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn framed culture as a set of

[...] patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action.⁹³

⁹¹ See Williams, Raymond (1976), ‘Culture’, in *op. cit.*, pp 89-93.

⁹² See Hall, Stuart (1992), ‘What Is this “Black” in Black Popular Culture’, in Gina Dent ed., *Black Popular Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press), pp. 21-33.

⁹³ See Kroeber A. L. & Kluckhohn C. (1952), *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Harvard University Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology Papers 47. The book famously compiled a list of 164 different definitions for the term *culture*, as mentioned in *AnthroBase*, *op. cit.*

While concise and all-inclusive, this definition also plants the seeds for problematic understandings of culture, which would in the 1970s and 1980s become characteristic of the postmodern approach. Favouring deconstruction and instituting relativism as an absolute, it has erected the cultural paradigm as an essential, inescapable framework to apprehend the world, which in the end renders culture even more difficult to define.

If Williams' cultural materialism already endeavours to counter that all-encompassing epistemological tendency in the late 1970s, in the 1980s, in what is probably his most famous work, Fredric Jameson elaborated a critique of postmodernism, depicting it as the *metanarrative* underlying the late capitalist mode of production.⁹⁴ Establishing a radical break with the dialectical analytical framework, the metanarrative aspect characteristic of postmodernism ultimately generated a disappearance or absence of differentiation between all the different spheres of human activity (politics, social relations, culture, economics, etc.), or between social roles or classes within each instance of this activity. Following from Adorno and Horkheimer's postwar analyses of culture in modern times, Marcuse had established the cultural sphere as a semi-autonomous realm, or at least an area partly severed from the capitalist mode of production.⁹⁵ Jameson observed how the cultural sphere which was still relatively autonomous in the modernist era had been colonized by organised corporate capitalism in postmodernism:

[...W]hat we have been calling postmodernism is inseparable from, and unthinkable without the hypothesis of, some fundamental mutation of the sphere of culture in the world of late capitalism which includes a momentous modification of its social function. [...] What we must now ask ourselves is whether it is not precisely this semi-autonomy of the cultural sphere which has been destroyed by the logic of late capitalism. Yet to argue that culture is today no longer endowed with the relative autonomy it once enjoyed as one level among others in earlier moments of capitalism (let alone in pre-capitalist societies) is not necessarily to imply its disappearance or extinction. Quite the contrary; we must go on to affirm that the dissolution of an autonomous sphere of culture is rather to be imagined in terms of an explosion: a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life – from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself – can be said to have become 'cultural' in some original and yet untheorised sense.⁹⁶

For Jameson, postmodernism has produced this very non-differentiated metanarrative to such an extent that it had become part and parcel of the core internal principle beneath the capitalist logic. Therefore, within the postmodern metanarrative underlying the dynamic of contemporary capitalism, culture had become a privileged paradigm underpinning any

⁹⁴ Initially written in 1984 for a *New Left Review* article, the argument was extended to a book published in 1991. See Jameson, Fredric (1991), *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso). See also Williams, Raymond (1977), *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

⁹⁵ Adorno, Theodor & Horkheimer, Max (1997) 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London: Verso), pp 120-167. Marcuse, Herbert (1968) 'The Affirmative Character of Culture' in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (London: Allen), pp 88-133.

⁹⁶ Jameson (1991), *ibid.*, pp 86-87.

manifestation of hegemony. Considering that culture essentially develops within three fields of expression – art, language, and technique⁹⁷ – artistic production, concentrating the three fields, could thus be argued to become a central paradigm, lying at the epicentre of that logic of neoliberalism – or ‘late capitalism’ to use Jameson’s term. Jameson emphasises that this incorporation of the cultural sphere to the postmodern metanarrative is fundamental in disarming critique before it can even be fully articulated, by annihilating all possibility of critical distance:

No theory of cultural politics current on the Left today has been able to do without one notion or another of a certain minimal aesthetic distance, of the possibility of the positioning of the cultural act outside the massive Being of capital, from which to assault this last. What the burden of our preceding demonstration suggests, however, is that distance in general (including “critical distance” in particular) has very precisely been abolished in the new space of postmodernism. We are submerged in its henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our now postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically (let alone theoretically) incapable of distanciation; meanwhile, it has already been observed how the prodigious new expansion of multinational capital ends up penetrating and colonising those very pre-capitalist enclaves (Nature and the Unconscious) which offered extraterritorial and Archimedean footholds for critical effectivity. The shorthand language of co-optation is for this reason omnipresent on the left, but would now seem to offer a most inadequate theoretical basis for understanding a situation in which we all, in one way or another, dimly feel that not only punctual and local counter-culture forms of cultural resistance and guerrilla warfare but also even overtly political interventions like those of The Clash are all somehow secretly disarmed and reabsorbed by a system of which they themselves might well be considered a part, since they can achieve no distance from it.⁹⁸

What Jameson writes about The Clash can be equally applied to the niche counter-cultural scene this research focuses on, namely, critical musical expressions in postcolonial France. A lot of artists on the French ‘*rap conscient*’ scene who have set up their own labels, including La Rumeur, Keny Arkana, or even other collectives like La K-Bine, are trapped in this contradiction. On the one hand, their aspiration to emancipation from the capitalist mode of production lead them to set up their own structures to achieve autonomy – La Rumeur Records for La Rumeur, La Callita for Keny Akana, and BBoyKonsian for La K-Bine.⁹⁹ On the other hand, the contradictions of economic production generate a form of necessary interaction with the market system which makes it impossible for them to be complete outsiders unabsorbed by it.¹⁰⁰

Departing from the all-pervasive paradigm that culture seemed to have become, Jameson discarded the postmodern approach – not primarily on moral grounds but on the essential intellectual aspiration to reinstate dynamic, dialectical thought, rooted in historicity. His analysis of the relationship between culture and capitalism provides a useful point of entry

⁹⁷ See the extended definition suggested by the scientific encyclopaedia *Technoscience* (in French): <http://www.techno-science.net/?onglet=glossaire&definition=5826>

⁹⁸ Jameson (1991), *ibid.*, p 87.

⁹⁹ See respectively www.la-rumeur.com/; <http://www.keny-arkana.com/>; <http://www.bboykonsian.com/>

¹⁰⁰ as we shall argue into more details in Chapter VI.

into any endeavour to situate the different forms of power in contemporary capitalism and delineate how it emerges materially in cultural forms. In other words, Jameson shows the cultural developments and reconfigurations of ideology in late capitalism as ordinary mainsprings underlying the enduring hegemony of the ruling class.

1.3 Cultural resistance, or the cultural dialectics of symbolic violence

From the discussion above, the relevance of a particular link between cultural practices and capitalist power, usually vested in the form of politics, can be easily deduced and understood. Again, this type of conception taps into a Gramscian reading of cultural hegemony organically and imperceptibly reproducing a ruling class status quo.¹⁰¹ This approach can also be traced in the Bourdieusian process of *naturalisation*. Inherent to the implementation of bourgeois cultural hegemony, naturalisation provides a more socially systemic perspective on ideological domination. While Althusser's notion of Ideological State Apparatus systematically construed culture in terms of power relations, Bourdieu interestingly interprets ideology in the dynamic, fierce, brutal terms of symbolic *violence*, to translate the unsuspected vitality and concealed ruthlessness of class domination nestling within the very fabric of the lives of the oppressed.¹⁰²

Symbolic violence: culture as an internalized sublimation of political domination

The concept of *symbolic violence*, also called *legitimate symbolic violence*, was initially enunciated by Bourdieu in 1970 in *La Reproduction* and elaborated in later works.¹⁰³ He defines *symbolic power* in such terms:

Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations.¹⁰⁴

Symbolic power is a legitimating power that elicits the consent of *both* the dominant and the dominated 'only through the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are

¹⁰¹ Gramsci (1971), *op. cit.*

¹⁰² Althusser's notion of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) can bring out the political dimension of culture, that of power appropriation, insofar as Althusser sketches culture as a forcefield wherein politics are embedded. See Althusser, Louis (1995) *Sur La Reproduction* (Paris: PUF, Actuel Marx Confrontation), p 102 ; Althusser, Louis (1971), 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press), pp. 121-176. Available online at: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>

¹⁰³ See Bourdieu, Pierre & Passeron, Jean-Claude (1990), *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage). See also Bourdieu, P. *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990); *Sociology in Question* (London: Sage, 1993) ; and *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁴ Bourdieu & Passeron (1990), *Reproduction...*, p 4.

subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it'. In that respect, symbolic violence underlies 'all expression [...] carried out by the one carrying it out and endured by the one enduring it only insofar as it is misrecognised as such'.¹⁰⁵ In other words, the dominated accept a form, discourse, or representation as legitimate and internalize through a process of *naturalisation* of their own condition of domination.¹⁰⁶

This process of naturalisation can be compared to Gramsci's notion discussed above of consent of the oppressed. But the main parallel with Gramsci lies in the notion of symbolic violence itself. Terray offers a good summary of Bourdieu's reflection on symbolic violence, arguing that the notion of symbolic violence is an attempt to sublimate the traditional opposition between violence and language; between violence (seen as a primal feature of nature) and discourse (seen as a constructed sign of culture).¹⁰⁷ In truth, the significance of Bourdieu for our analysis here could rest on this *Aufhebung* (sublation) between violence and language, between physical repression and ideological coercion. Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony undertakes to sublimate the opposition between base and superstructure, between ideology and consciousness, attempting to conceive of a dialectical dynamic between the two terms. Bourdieu's very aim in reformulating the classical Marxist notion of ideology under the term *symbolic violence* seems precisely to underline the violence at stake in the realm of *logos*, carrying a capacity to impose the means for comprehending and adapting to the social world by representing economic and political power in disguised forms habitually taken for granted, such as discourse and representations. Following from Bourdieu's conception, it may be argued that cultural practices, art, and aesthetic forms such as musical expressions, are necessarily embedded in that ideological dynamic, or even that they cannot exist outside of the realm of symbolic power.

The notion of symbolic violence will be a useful tool for our subsequent empirical analysis, insofar as not only does it stress that power necessarily translates into *violence*, albeit internalised and invisible, but it also provides a single framework the various forms of oppression most postcolonial communities in France undergo. Indeed, cultural hegemony over postcolonial communities can take different forms: institutional racism (race), social exclusion (class), and denial of the colonial past and its consequences in the present in terms of racial and/or social inequalities (cultural identity), along with exclusion from on the

¹⁰⁵ Bourdieu (1993), *Sociology in Question*, p 141 ; Bourdieu (1990), *op. cit.*, p 164.

¹⁰⁶ Bourdieu (1998), *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, pp 107-129. See also Bourdieu, Pierre & Wacquant, Loïc (1992), *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p 167.

¹⁰⁷ Terray, Emmanuel, 'Réflexions sur la violence symbolique', in *Actuel Marx* n°20: *Autour de Pierre Bourdieu* (Paris: PUF, 2nd semestre 1996), pp 11- 25.

symbolic realm of political representation (politics). This was most recently taken up again with the case of censorship of Zone d'Expression Populaire already narrated above, prosecuted for putting together a political pamphlet entitled '*Nique la France: devoir d'insolence*' under the form of a song, an album and a book.¹⁰⁸ This all too familiar scenario is another blatant example of the systematic attempt on behalf of mainstream discourse to silence or repress any form of political expression emanating from postcolonial communities in France by keeping their very autonomous political existence in *denial*. To return to Bourdieu, this systematic denial of postcolonial communities as specific autonomous political agents is one of the most violent forms of repression, and most invisible and pervasive instances of symbolic violence.

Paradoxically enough, Bourdieu was heavily criticised for providing an over-deterministic, or at least quite disparaging (because systematic) analysis of domination. The main thrust of the critique was to argue that Bourdieu's notion only reinforced an essentialist approach of domination in the very denunciation of the reproduction of power at a symbolic level, hence not offering an emancipatory critique of domination. This is particularly true for the struggles of national liberation in the colonies still taking place in France as he was beginning to conceive of symbolic violence. In that sense, Bourdieu could be deemed to disarm rather than provide a conceptual tool to anti-colonial resistance. However his notion of symbolic violence equally manages to put forward a conceptual framework for an analysis of culture as a form of domination, thereby theorising the conditions of the emergence of cultural resistance, particularly insofar as Bourdieu derives his reading of institutional domination from the Gramscian concept of cultural hegemony. In addition, formulating ideology in terms of violence can rehabilitate the notion of class struggle taking place within the *war of position*. It brings new breath and scope to the resistance which is endowed with a reactivated sense of urgency and potential empowerment.

A dialectical definition of culture

To return to our exploration of culture as a form of power struggle via Marxist scholarship, the different authors we have reviewed provide tools to elaborate a revision of the definition of culture, more structured and dialectical than the account proposed above by Kroeber and Kluckhohn. Starting with Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony, taking a detour via Jameson's understanding of culture in the age of postmodernism and equally

¹⁰⁸ See Z.E.P. (Zone d'Expression Populaire), *Nique la France; Devoir d'insolence* (Darna ed. / Court-Circuit, 2011) LP & book. See also : <http://www.zep-site.com/>

inspired by the cultural materialist perspective of Raymond Williams, we will now define the term culture dynamically. All the definitions below in italics extracted from the *Oxford English Dictionary* have been re-organised according to my own analytical perspective on culture, depicting it as a process of class domination in its very development, and providing an ideological justification for the existence of class.

Thus I propose to classify into four different clusters of meaning:

- (i) **Culture as labour (activity)**: a general process of human activity in everyday life. *‘An integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon the capacity for symbolic thought and social learning; the cultivating, development and refinement of mind, faculties, tastes, and manners by education and training; the intellectual side of civilization.’*
- (ii) **Culture as product of labour (capital)**: the material result of this process of human activity in society. *‘The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.’*
- (ii) **Culture as human capital of distinction (status)**: the symbolic result of this process of human activity on individuals. *‘The condition of being trained toward refinement of mind, tastes and manners; a refined knowledge, understanding or appreciation of this training and its manifestations; excellence of taste in fine arts and humanities.’*
- (iv) **Culture as materially situated position (class)**: a specific field of human activity, located in scope, space and time. *‘A particular form or type of intellectual development; the civilization, customs, artistic achievements, etc. of a particular nation, people, or group, esp. at a certain stage of its development in history; the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution, organisation, or group.’*

The distinctive feature transpiring from this typology is a structural reading of culture depicted as a systemic logic of hegemony. In other words, even from an epistemological standpoint, as culture develops, burgeoning into and interpenetrating various spheres of activity in society, a gradual establishing of domination is deployed, implying ideology, social hegemony, and ultimately, the reinforcing of social class. The underlying premise contends that culture, primarily and necessarily as activity – or to use Marxian terminology, labour – already has power immanent within its very core.

Hegemony, ideology and culture

While this structural definition may seem convincing, recent developments on hegemony have put its systemic logic into question. Most famously, Laclau and Mouffe have argued this Marxist conception of culture to be flawed insofar as, due to a privileging of the base-superstructure paradigm, it posits the centrality of class identity, ultimately impeding a more multi-faceted and non-unified process of revolutionary hegemony.¹⁰⁹ This contentious argument has triggered fiery debates as to whether their self-styled post-Marxist stance is an all-too relativistic reactionary repudiation of Marxism disempowering class struggle, or on the contrary a

...fundamental theoretical renovation of Marxism, [...] maintaining the need for struggle across many social relations, including class struggle at the point of production, and the need for these struggles to unite beyond various transformations within this or that relation or institution, to construct a new social order in its entirety – in other words, revolution.¹¹⁰

While in-depth debate on this issue lies beyond the scope of this chapter, Laclau and Mouffe's argument puts forward a more relational approach to counter-hegemony, constructed on a more multi-positioned, broader basis, which will be useful for us when considering how scattered postcolonial identities and forms of resistance are. We will return to this question towards the end of our analysis and reconsider the matter after having laid out carefully the empirical data. Before we can reach that point, we will consider the dynamic definition enunciated above as a proposal on which to base and unfold our analysis.

¹⁰⁹ Laclau, Ernesto & Mouffe, Chantal (2001), *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso).

¹¹⁰ See Brian Precious's review of the book for Spectrezone, retrieved at: <http://www.spectrezone.org/reviews/laclaumouffe.htm>

2. Power and identity: the ontological grounding of domination

As a concealed form of domination of the ruling class through institutions, symbolic violence establishes a bridge between culture and politics via ideology. Bourdieu brings power into the cultural terrain and expound the discrete mechanisms it entails in terms of social relations. Bringing the focus on social representation and self-definition of identity, the concept of *stigma* developed by Ervin Goffman introduces political domination at the heart of identity, built in systemic discrimination, internalized and naturalized in the same way as symbolic violence. However, for Goffman, symbolic violence is envisaged from the standpoint of the ontological experience of stigmatization, and ultimately, internalized, systemic discrimination. This is particularly useful when discussing postcolonial communities in France insofar as some parallels can be established with the emergence of postcolonialism as a theoretical framework. In the following pages, we will examine Goffman's concept of reversal of the stigma. Raising the question of a connection with specific postcolonial context, we will also extend Goffman's notion of reversal of the stigma further to discuss Fanon's more radical and more political stance in his justification of violence as a form of empowerment and resistance.

2.1 *Stigma as discrimination systematized and internalized*

The concept of *stigma* is inscribed in Goffman's more general, rather functionalist approach to the social world.¹¹¹ Undertaking a sociological analysis of face-to-face interaction, Goffman threw the first seeds of his reflection on stigma in the late 1950s. He elaborated a dramaturgical approach on the tradition of symbolic interactionism which envisaged social relations as theatrical performances, and individual identities as social constructs shaped by the roles performed in given situations on society's stage according to specific interaction rituals.¹¹² An account of the lives of stigmatized, inmates in mental institutions, *Asylums* evidently convenes a comparison with Foucault's study of disciplinary institutions.¹¹³ An analysis of 'The Underlife of a Public Institution',¹¹⁴ *Asylums* can also be connected to Bourdieu's notions of symbolic power and cultural capital, insofar as the main

¹¹¹ Branaman, Ann (1997), 'Goffman's Social Theory', in Charles Lemert & Ann Branaman ed., *The Goffman Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell), p xlv.

¹¹² See Goffman, E. (1959), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Anchor Books).

¹¹³ See Foucault, Michel (1975). *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House) ; Goffman, E. (1961), *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books). See also Goffman, E. (1986), *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (NY: Touchstone Books, Simon & Schuster).

¹¹⁴ Which is the title of the third essay of *Asylums*. Goffman, E. (1961).

stakes lie in unmasking the hidden ideological structures of domination. Yet Goffman's specific angle on the individual focuses rather on the psychological result of the social experience on the stigmatized entity, which is always understood in structural terms, suggesting a dialectical potential in the idea of *reversal* or resistance:

Whenever we look at a social establishment, we find a counter to this first theme: we find that participants decline in some way to accept the official view of what they should be putting into and getting out of the organization and, behind this, of what sort of self and world they are to accept for themselves... We find a multitude of homely stories, each in its way a movement of liberty. Whenever worlds are laid on, underlives develop.¹¹⁵

Hence, the 'confined self' can display a level of resistance to the brutal alienation generated by the internment in mental institutions by refusing to abide to institutional domination in her/his everyday life in many discreet ways, constituting the different elements of the 'underlives' of a sort of subterranean resistance:

He can openly default his obligations, separate himself from what he has been tried to, and brazen out the redefining looks that people give him. He can reject the bond's implication for his conception of himself but prevent this alienation from being apparent in any of his actions. He can privately embrace the self-implications of his involvement, being to himself what the others who are involved feel he ought to be.¹¹⁶

For Branaman, three main strategies, ranging from passive (apathy) to more active (standing *outside*) attitudes, are available to the stigmatized self to resist alienation from her/himself, hence dehumanization:

- (i) the adoption of a standpoint outside the moral field defined by "normals";
- (ii) apathy towards the self-image management techniques and interaction rituals effectively carried out by the socially powerful; and
- (iii) disinvestment in self.¹¹⁷

Along with Keny Arkana's call to civil disobedience opening this chapter, the subversive attitude adopted by our artists only mirrors amongst a significant minority of *banlieue* youth a broader refusal to submit to the brutal hegemony of a ruling class disempowering them from any form of agency. This refusal can be expressed in terms more or less explicit, ranging from active revolt as was the case in the November 2005 riots, to the more passive reflex of subcultural withdrawal on a community of peers. All the same, both stances manage to question the Republican status quo and its consensus around '*liberté, égalité, fraternité*' when put into the practice of social interaction, and of broader social relations.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ *Asylums*, p 305.

¹¹⁶ *Asylums*, p 175.

¹¹⁷ Branaman (1997), *ibid.*, p lxii.

¹¹⁸ In that sense, all the literature in sociology and anthropology depicting *banlieue* youth as prone to passive community withdrawal could be offset with a comparison with the post-2005, much more actively empowering analysis of MIR leading figure Sadri Khiari. See for example Aquatias, Sylvain (2003), 'Jeunes de banlieue, entre communauté et société', in *Socio-anthropologie* N°2, 1997, available at : <http://socio-anthropologie.revues.org/index34.html> ; see also Khiari, S. (2006), *op. cit.*

In *Stigma* (1963), Goffman built on this dynamic of resistance observed and generalized it, not to apply it merely to the confined self in mental institutions, but to the stigmatized self more broadly. Based on physical attributes ('abominations of the body'), on mental attitudes (including or implied in 'mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts, and radical political behavior'), and on the cultural 'tribal stigmas of race, nation, and religion', Goffman identifies three types of stigma which all produce 'an undesired differentness'.¹¹⁹ The specificity of the stigma is to remain attached to the stigmatized self at the social level, where 'varieties of discrimination' are exercised: 'We construct a stigma theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents, sometimes rationalizing an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social class'.¹²⁰ From there, for the stigmatized self who becomes 'not quite human', bearing the stigma implies internalizing this social representation of inferiority through a process of acceptance of the stigma since

...those who have dealings with him fail to accord him the respect and regard which the uncontaminated aspects of his social identity have led them to anticipate extending, and have led to anticipate receiving; he echoes this denial by finding that some of his own attributes warrant it.¹²¹

In fact, one of the chief achievements of the concept of stigma may be found in its ontological grounding of the notion of domination. While the concept of cultural hegemony implies a dynamic facilitating ruling class domination, the process of stigmatization proposed by Goffman here is more deeply embedded in the human condition, rooted into self-perception and individual psyche. Further still, it seems even more entrenched than the mechanism of symbolic violence, because ultimately it delineates a hierarchy of the human. In other words, the order of social interaction here is hedged in not merely by class divisions, but primarily by a more fundamental sharing out of the human condition – with the stigmatized being always segregated from the 'normal' legitimate human condition but never absolutely excluded from the latter, hence always ultimately dehumanized. In the light of the reading that the scholars of Subaltern Studies, key thinkers of postcolonialism, made in the 1980s of the Gramscian term *subaltern*, this conception of stigma is endowed with a specific postcolonial element particularly relevant for our enquiry here.¹²² Arguably synonym to the

¹¹⁹ Goffman (1963), *Stigma*, pp 4-5.

¹²⁰ *Stigma*, p 5.

¹²¹ *Stigma*, p 9.

¹²² To get a grasp of the debates taking place within the Subaltern Studies Group, which are far beyond the scope of our enquiry here, see for example Guha, Ranajit ed. (1997), *A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press) ; and Ashcroft, Bill ; Griffiths, Gareth ; Tiffin Helen eds. (1995), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (London : Routledge) for essential texts.

more widespread Marxian term ‘proletariat’, the term ‘subaltern’ refers to persons socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure.¹²³ With the term ‘subaltern’, Gramsci allows for a more nuanced and fluid interpretation the strict Marxian acceptance, decentring the notion of class to encompass all other forms of oppression of the ‘non-normals’ or stigmatized, whether because of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or religion.¹²⁴ In that sense, this theoretical distinction between Western and subaltern (in postcolonialism), and between normals and stigmatized (Goffman) could be useful to us in empirical enquiry. Indeed a majority of the communities we are dealing with here in French contemporary setting are either of ex-colonial background, or have stigma at the heart of their lives.

2.2 The reversal of the stigma as social subversion

To return to Goffman, with this type of distinction between normals and stigmatized taking place, a mixed interaction between them cannot take place outside a space of social malaise, or at least a form of ambiguity. This discrepancy is often expressed by exaggerations of ordinary reactions. For instance over-asserted solicitude or social contempt on behalf of the normals may often encounter embarrassment, withdrawal, or aggressive attitudes in the stigmatized self, all those attitudes being expressed to a varying degree.¹²⁵ Yet the stigmatized self has to learn to adjust to this rupture of social rituals, and compensate it routinely by concealing the malaise generated. Comparable to the process of symbolic violence insofar as it should not be exposed, the initial process of social stigmatization is all the more effective since the stigmatized self is required to conceal it in social interaction, and ‘act as to imply neither that his burden is heavy nor that bearing it has made him different’. This form of expropriation of social identity makes it ultimately impossible for him to

...live as much as possible “like any other person”, and be accepted “for what he really is”. [...] The nature of “good adjustment” is now apparent. It requires that the stigmatized self individually cheerfully and unselfconsciously accept himself as essentially the same as normals, while at the same time he voluntarily withholds himself from those situations in which normals would find difficult to give lip service to their similar acceptance of him.¹²⁶

¹²³ See discussion of translator’s notes on terminology in Gramsci (1971), *ibid.*, p xiv.

¹²⁴ See Gramsci (1971), *op. cit.*, pp. xiii-xiv ; see also Stephen Morton’s discussion of the term ‘subaltern’ in relation to postcolonialism in Morton, Stephen (2007), *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Malden, MA: Polity), pp. 95-123.

¹²⁵ See *Stigma*, pp 105-125. In chapter 3 entitled ‘Group Alignment and Ego Identity’, wherein Goffman examines how the stigmatized perceive themselves both in terms of stigma and in relation to others in the stigmatized group where they belong.

¹²⁶ *Stigma*, pp 121-123.

Therefore, departing from the sheer existence of a *deviation* from the internalized norm representing her/him as different and/or inferior in social interaction, the stigmatized self may already hold a potential of resistance to this dehumanization. In other words, emancipation from the stigma lies in the self-same locus where stigmatization originates – namely, *differentness*. Goffman identifies five strategies for the stigmatized self to correct the stigma and/or expose the deviation:¹²⁷

- (i) Quest for assimilation: try to correct the foundations of stigma by denying its plight and concealing its symbols;
- (ii) Overcompensation: prove that despite the socially debilitating conditions of stigma, difference does not prevent excelling at different tasks which would be difficult even for the normals;
- (iii) Self-deprecating over-performance of difference: defy the normative interpretation of the stigmatized persona according to the internalized perspective of stigma, i.e. indulge in the social ritual of presenting in front of normals the series of flaws attributed to fellow stigmatized selves;
- (iv) Instrumentalization: take advantage of stigma for one's own social advancement;
- (v) Reversal of the stigma: redefine the stigma as a social ground of pride, and escape the *imposed* particular difference by reclaiming this particular trait as a general or collective character: such logic is at play with feminist identity for instance, or in the famous case of *négritude*, a form of reversal of the stigma elaborated by French postcolonial founding author Aimé Césaire.¹²⁸

While only the latter strategy offers a space of resistance to dehumanization, all five approaches stem from a rather hetero-determined logic. In other words all five designations are founded on the external perspective of 'normals' on the stigmatized self, and not initiated by the 'stigmatized' themselves. In the end this tends to set out the very limits of reversing the stigma.

¹²⁷ This is a synopsis of Chapter 4, entitled 'The Self and Its Other', where Goffman focuses on the relationship between being stigmatized and not being stigmatized particularly in terms of perspectives. *Stigma*, pp 126-139. See also Françoise Lorcerie's summative chart of those five reactions, classified according to two paradigms: resemblance and self-esteem. See Lorcerie, Françoise ed. (2003), *L'école et le défi ethnique: éducation et intégration* (Paris: Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique, ESF éditeur, coll. Actions sociales / Confrontations), pp 33-37.

¹²⁸ The concept of *négritude* is most clearly spelt out in two of Césaire's major works: *Return to My Native Land* (Tarsset, Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books Ltd, 1997) and *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York & London: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

Thus, with the notion of reversal of the stigma, Goffman's analysis ultimately aimed to generate resistance to the determinism of political domination set out at a deep, ontological level via the assertion of *difference*, empowering the *subaltern*, to return to Gramscian terminology. Widely used in postcolonial theory to conceptualise colonialism and its aftermath of Western cultural imperialism, the term 'subaltern' certainly entails a conception of domination and oppression beyond that of class to incorporate race and cultural identity insofar as the subaltern is dehumanized and deprived of human agency. Yet according to Gayatri Spivak, the specificity of subaltern identity for the postcolonial subject lies not merely in the dispossession of human agency, but also in an ontological 'space of difference' which can never be bridged:

[...] *subaltern* is not just a classy word for 'oppressed', for [the] Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie. [...] In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern – a space of difference. Now, who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern. [...] Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus; they don't need the word 'subaltern'. [...] They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They're within the hegemonic discourse, wanting a piece of the pie, and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern.¹²⁹

Founding thinker of postcolonialism, Edward Saïd systematically connects the subaltern to the figure of the colonized, along with the postcolonial protagonist. Bringing his insights into the colonial system in Martinique and Algeria in the 1950s, Fanon also posits the *indigène* as a 'not quite human' subaltern, systematically alienated subject *par excellence*. Along with Memmi, he opens a potential for liberation from French colonial domination, contributing to the politicisation of resistance. The following pages shall retrace the steps of this process of resistance, finding a historical continuity in the figures of the colonized (Memmi, Fanon), migrant worker (Sayad), and postcolonial self (Sayad and Hajjat).

2.3 Colonized identity as stigma, violence as resistance

Widely acknowledged as a founding thinker of postcolonialism and third-worldism, Fanon has theorised the central stigma generated by colonization on the colonized self, and the process of dehumanization it creates in the context of struggles of colonial liberation. When pitted against Goffman's notion of reversal of stigma, Fanon's analysis could be argued to offer a more emancipatory critique because it aims at a form of universality. Not only is this universalistic aim broader and more inclusive for the human condition of

¹²⁹ de Kock, Leon (1992), 'Interview With Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa', in *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*. 23.3, pp 29-47. Retrieved at : <http://ariel.synergiesprairies.ca/ariel/index.php/ariel/article/viewFile/2505/2458>

domination, but it also stands as the only valid tool to break out of the subaltern condition. In that sense, Saïd stresses the significance of the postcolonial figure as the main protagonist of a cultural process of *reinscription* seeking ‘to achieve recognition, [namely] to rechart and then occupy the place in imperial cultural forms reserved for subordination, to occupy it self-consciously, fighting for it on the very same territory once ruled by a consciousness that assumed subordination of a designated inferior Other’.¹³⁰

In *Black Skins White Masks* (1952), Fanon studied thoroughly the process of racial alienation and the deriving logic of *assimilation* for the ‘black’, who internalizes the hierarchy as a form of self-hatred, left with a choice between

... soit de se conformer et embrasser la main qui l’enchaîne, soit – contre les mécanismes qui l’assigne à une place donnée – tente[r] par tous les moyens de se projeter et d’atteindre une ‘blancheur’ jugée salvatrice mais irrémédiablement inaccessible. [...] Le ‘nègre’ c’est donc, à la fois, le ‘noir’ dans les yeux du ‘blanc’, et le ‘noir’ qui cherche son image dans les yeux des ‘blancs’: et cherche donc à construire une image ‘blanchisée’ de lui-même. Image qui se superpose à celle stéréotypée du ‘noir’ construite par le ‘blanc’. Cette recherche ne peut conduire le ‘noir’ qu’à cette place intermédiaire: en tentant de s’élever vers le ‘blanc’, il ne peut atteindre qu’une place toujours inférieure; et qui ne le conduira finalement qu’à une caricature de lui-même: c’est là un mécanisme sans fin (touchant au mythe de Sisyphe) qui ne le mène nulle part. C’est tout le processus qui conduit les Antillais à vouloir se rapprocher sans jamais pouvoir l’atteindre la figure du ‘blanc’ en rejetant par là même la figure du ‘noir’.¹³¹

Like Bourdieu, Fanon stresses the key role played by language as a form of forced ascription (*assignation*) to establish a hierarchy between ‘white’ and ‘black’, and the fundamentally repressive function of language underlying the mechanism of ideological domination. His theory of colonial alienation portrays a systemic relation of domination between ‘white’ and ‘black’, and subtly exposes the internalization of the inferiority complex and feelings of despair and powerlessness on behalf of the colonized, and the complex of superiority and feelings of condescendence and omnipotence on behalf of the colonizer. The Fanonian take on assimilation and his analysis of the imbricated, mutual relation between ‘white’ and ‘black’ has been judiciously complemented by the *portrait of the colonized* Albert Memmi offered around the same period. In *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957), the Tunisian author undertook to portray in detail the inter-dependent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, essential to the perpetuation of the relations of colonial exploitation.¹³² Similarly to Goffman and Fanon, Memmi noted that because of the unequal relation of power and exploitation taking place, generating submission, humiliation, and deprivation of fundamental rights, the colonized would hence tend to *conform* (or consent) to the mirror and

¹³⁰ Saïd, Edward (1994), *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage books), p 253.

¹³¹ Fotia, Yvon, ‘Frantz Fanon, la vérité noire, l’expérience anti-coloniale’, in *Les Figures de la Domination* [online]. Retrieved at: <http://www.lesfiguresdeladomination.org/index.php?id=239>

¹³² See Memmi, Albert (1991), *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press).

mystified image made of her/him by the colonizer.¹³³ With this process of assimilation generating cultural alienation, colonial revolt was hence deemed inevitable. Clear incarnation of the *other*, the colonized would hence revert her/his 'stigma', and assert her/his *difference* for colonial liberation, united with her/his peers under the same banner of colonized identity. However, as Memmi interestingly highlighted, this unity in anti-colonial revolutionary struggle could also easily be structured around reactionary or bourgeois apparatuses such as the church or the family. Paradoxically, once independence was reached, those uniting beacons could ultimately become factors of not a simple reproduction of social relations of exploitation, but a reconfiguration of it within the social sphere of the ex-colonized community.¹³⁴

While both Memmi and Fanon are considered seminal figures for theorising anti-colonial emancipation, Fanon may be argued to reach out further than Memmi into the very construction and deconstruction of the colonized self. Departing from his attempt to theorise racism as a systemic form of domination, Fanon is also remembered for positing violence as a significant, and even central force for the revolutionary struggle for national liberation. While for Bourdieu, violence is implied and concealed in the exercise of symbolic domination, for Fanon, violence is a much more prosaic, tangible situation of colonial domination, and is hence the only logical rational response on behalf of the colonized. A *legitimate* reaction in the face of colonial repression against indigenous identities and cultures, violence is also a cleansing force for the colonized ego, enabling restoration of her/his self-esteem: 'At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect'.¹³⁵ Comparable to the process set in motion by hysteria,¹³⁶ violence may be deemed a primary form of empowerment insofar as '*l'opprimé retrouvera l'humanité confisquée dans une révolte, qui [...] se voit protégée dans sa caractéristique violente, de toutes formes de récupération*'.¹³⁷

¹³³ Memmi (1991), *ibid.*, pp 121-162.

¹³⁴ Memmi (1991), *op. cit.*, pp 163-186.

¹³⁵ Fanon, Frantz (1963), *The Wretched of The Earth* (New York: Grove Press), p 94.

¹³⁶ And female hysteria in particular, a phenomenon Freud observed after Charcot in the late 19th century. See Freud, Sigmund, (1962), 'Charcot', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume III (1893-1899)*. London: Hogarth Press. pp. 11-23.

¹³⁷ Fotia, *op. cit.*

3. Resisting (dis)integration: postcolonial cultures, politics of empowerment

Not unlike Goffman, Fanon suggests that the key to emancipation lies in the self-same locus as that of domination, and the destruction it entails also bears the seeds of destruction of the colonial system itself. Indeed, following a phase of denial and negation, self-hatred (assimilation) may generate a great refusal, which for Fanon is an embryonic form of revolt and forestalling ground for resistance. Centring our discussion on the analyses of Fanon and Sayad, we will now set out to explore this process in the specific context of contemporary France where the battlefield of power now uses *difference* and *subaltern*, postcolonial identity as forms of empowerment and mainsprings of revolutionary hegemony.

3.1 *The politicisation of release*

One of the most remarkable contributions of Fanon lies in building on Césaire's concept of *négritude* seen as a primary point of emergence of revolt and in conceptualising, before the reversal of the stigma was theorised, the process of resistance and emancipation. Fanon's theory seems much more specifically rooted, hence reaching deeper than Goffman's concept in terms of revolutionary potential insofar as it strives to elaborate a conceptual dynamic of emancipation from the ontological matrix created by colonial domination.¹³⁸ To do so, he forestalled a possibility of reversal of the racial stigma beyond the narrow and specific scope of *négritude* to anticipate a more universalistic form of emancipation via the politicisation of *release*.

Artistic performance and consciousness as revolt

Fanon identifies four possible reactions for the colonized in the face of her/his predicament, all of them forms of *revolt* hence featuring some degree or scope for *resistance*:

- (i) Conformism (assimilation, self-hatred);
- (ii) Violence (against oneself or others);
- (iii) Conscious revolt (*révolte conscientisée*), a definite step towards political struggle;
- and lastly,
- (iv) Dance and music – a paradoxical form of revolt.

More constructive than (i) conformism and (ii) violence, the latter two instances proceed to a reversal of the racial stigma beyond *négritude*. In the context of liberation struggles

¹³⁸ Aimé Césaire, who was Fanon's teacher at school, is a clear inspiration for Fanon, particularly in his early writings. On *négritude*, see discussion above and Césaire, A. (1972) *ibid.* and Césaire (1997), *op. cit.*

observed and experienced by Fanon, (iii) conscious revolt and (iv) artistic performance also outline basic programmatic principles for a theory of revolutionary emancipation. The qualitative shift between the former two reactions (assimilation; violence) and the latter (conscious revolt; artistic performance) lies in the difference of scope and scale. Clearly, conscious revolt and dance can no longer be situated at an individual level but are necessarily inscribed in a social, collective dynamic. Already in his early works, Fanon suggests that the process of realization (*prise de conscience*) is no longer restricted to the oppression of an individual, but is understood in structural terms, directed towards a *system* of oppression: ‘the problem of colonialism includes not only the interrelations of objective historical conditions, but also human attitudes toward these conditions’.¹³⁹ From the material conditions of the individual experience of oppression emerges a process of realization, generating the necessity of political struggle for the colonized:

For the Negro who works on a sugar plantation in Le Robert, there is only one solution: to fight. He will embark on this struggle, and he will pursue it, not as the result of a Marxist or idealistic analysis but quite simply because he cannot conceive of life otherwise than in the form of a battle against exploitation, misery, and hunger.¹⁴⁰

For Fotia, in this shift lies the promise of politicisation, since realization generates a potential for launching a revolutionary process of not merely ideological but also social and political transformations: ‘*l’analyse doit intégrer que cette attitude adoptée, acceptant ou refusant la situation est, dans un deuxième temps, la clé d’une prise de conscience, d’une conscientisation, condition mais aussi porteuse et productrice pour elle-même de transformations*’.¹⁴¹ To his Marxist analytical framework positing *class* conflict at the centre of political consciousness, Fanon adds the Gramscian notion of cultural hegemony reinterpreted in colonial terms. With this intellectual approach, he aims to identify a strategy of *grassroots* revolutionary politics. Paving the way for what has later become known as *third-worldism* (*tiers-mondisme*) – allegedly a reductive term difficult to universalize due to the stigma of colonial history it carries – the postcolonial approach delineated by Fanon discards the vanguard party dynamic and puts forward an arguably more organic form of revolutionary struggle: ‘*Ce n’est pas au parti communiste de mener la révolution, mais c’est au parti révolutionnaire d’émerger de la lutte révolutionnaire*’.¹⁴²

As concerns the last form of revolt, dance and music (or artistic performance) can be interpreted as a rather specific form of emancipation wherein social consciousness is never

¹³⁹ Fanon, Frantz (1986), *Black Skin White Masks* (London: Pluto Press), p 84.

¹⁴⁰ Fanon (1986), *ibid.*, p 224.

¹⁴¹ Fotia, *op. cit.*

¹⁴² Fotia, *ibid.*

fully realized. Yet dance is essentially a discourse which in Bourdieusian terms could be termed *symbolic* insofar as it is not explicit, ultimately underlying ‘*les passions qu’elle exprime et qu’elle révèle ou même dissimule*’.¹⁴³ It activates a subterranean mechanism regenerating elements of ‘underlives’ (to use Goffmanian terms), which according to Sartre perform the function of staging a resistance to the social condition of the colonized:

They dance ; that keeps them busy ; it relaxes their painfully contracted muscles ; and then the dance mimes secretly, often without their knowing, the refusal they cannot utter and the murders they dare not commit. In certain districts, they make use of that last resort – possession by spirits.¹⁴⁴

The same logic underlies artistic performance and could be legitimately applied to musical practice. Fanon however, examines dance more specifically as a self-defence response of the body to the traumatic suffering experienced by the colonized. An aesthetic response to a neurotic trauma, dance is a device for the colonized to *act*: perform the freedom she/he is deprived of, and proceed to a re-enactment of

[...] l’acte symbolique et la mort du dominant. Le “noir”, à la fois dans la réalité de sa vie, la vie qu’il a vraiment, la vie qui est une mort, danse tout à la fois ces réalités, la faim, la misère, la violence, l’oppression, la frustration – il danse ainsi sa réalité qui est une folie – mais il danse également ses rêves et ses aspirations, sa liberté, ses désirs d’une vie meilleure.¹⁴⁵

Thus artistic performance may be construed as a paradoxical form of revolt insofar as the unravelling of trauma and the reconfiguration of social perception can only take place within the bounds of the symbolic. Yet it is this very limitation in itself which sets in motion a dynamic of disentanglement and dis-alienation, acting as a lever bestowing the symbolic act of performance with its liberating potential. Hence, the *dénouement* is only possible if it remains within the field of the symbolic: with performance thereby reverting symbolic domination, appropriating symbolic power hence performing emancipation and empowerment.

3.2 Integration as postcolonial assimilation

While Fanon’s depiction of the specificity of colonial *difference* may be compared to Goffman’s notion of social malaise in mixed interaction, the study undertaken by Bourdieu and Sayad in *Le Déracinement* offers a sociological analysis of this particular yet pivotal form of systemic subjugation.¹⁴⁶ Sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad consistently pursued his research into the ex-colonial immigrant and then postcolonial condition, delineating a clear

¹⁴³ Fotia, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre in the preface of *The Wretched of the Earth*. See Fanon (1963), *op. cit.*, p 19.

¹⁴⁵ Fotia, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Bourdieu, Pierre & Sayad, Abdelmalek (1964), *Le déracinement: La crise de l’agriculture traditionnelle en Algérie* (Paris: Minuit).

connection between *assimilation* (of the colonized), the process of *naturalisation* (of the immigrant), and ultimately, the conception of *integration* for the postcolonial generation. In other words, the postcolonial subject clearly inherits this structural disposition of colonial domination as she/he is being summoned to *conform* – conformity, or conformism implying being, becoming or remaining invisible in the metropolis (*injonction d'invisibilité*) imposed on the Algerian immigrant.¹⁴⁷ Sayad underlines that the vision given of the migrant worker is reductionist, as it is read predominantly in economic terms. In other words, he suggests that obscuring the political and cultural dimensions of immigration gave rise to a repressed alterity: thus, within the cultural hegemony of the (i.e., usually 'white' and 'French'/'*français de souche*') ruling class, 'popular culture', 'migrant culture' becomes antinomic with culture as such (*culture tout court*), hence an endogenous – or even *indigenous* – culture becomes incompatible with 'French' culture.

But the figure of the immigrant is also adapted or incorporated to the needs of the ruling class, a phenomenon which can be traced in the taxonomic shifts in denomination, since terms lose their political and symbolic efficiency for the ruling class. Thus the figure of the *immigrant* becomes that of the *minority*, just like the notion of *immigration* is a paradigmatic variant of the former situation of *colonization*. However, a deterritorialisation occurs here, or at least major spatial displacement. Indeed while in colonization, the assimilating society (or colonizer) imposes its hegemony directly on the colonized, with immigration, the ex-colonized now immigrant comes to the assimilating society (or ruling class) to be assimilated via naturalization. The same process is at stake with the taxonomic shift from *naturalization* to *integration*:

Integration is understood to be a state, a point of arrival, a quality to which several factors contribute, some of them objective and materially objectified, others immaterial or of symbolic order, and transcending the whole group or society and giving it the makings of its spirit, its own style, and its internal coherence. And integration as understood in this sense or as a social and therefore collective reality, is no doubt the first precondition for integration in the second sense of the individual integration of the parts into the whole. The greater and the more powerful the group's ability to integrate, and the more necessary it becomes to integrate into the group each of its constituent parts, old and new. [...] We now make a convenient distinction between integration and the word 'assimilation': *integration presupposes the integrity of the individual who is absorbed but not dissolved into the group, whereas assimilation is, it is argued, equivalent to the negation and disappearance of that integrity.*¹⁴⁸

Yet to Sayad, both cases implement an *imposition* of universalism. Arguably a contradiction in terms, this pattern recurs in French history and underlies the civilising mission of France

¹⁴⁷ See Sayad, Abdelmalek (2004), *The Suffering of the Migrant* (Cambridge: Polity), esp. Chap 11 'Naturalization'. For a history of French immigration, see Noiriél, Gérard (1988), *Le Creuset français. Histoire de l'immigration (XIX^e-XX^e siècles)* (Paris: Seuil).

¹⁴⁸ Sayad (2004), *op. cit.*, pp 221-222, emphasis mine.

throughout her colonial conquests. Along with this, the prescriptive and chauvinistic character of secularism endows the notion of integration with a particularly normative and historically loaded significance, perpetrating a systemic form of *stigma*, that of *exclusion*.¹⁴⁹ A structural phenomenon, stigma for Sayad is a symbolic systematic device resorted to conceal deeper relations of political domination developing in a specific historical context of colonization and its socio-economic consequences.

Citizenship and exclusion as foundations of the political order

Interestingly enough, the shift from the figure of the immigrant to that of minority, along with the taxonomic journey from colonization to exclusion seems to do away with the notion of agency, repressing the terms of the continuing relation of symbolic, social, cultural and political domination at stake in those very denominations. The agency of the ruling class, incarnated in a wide array of state apparatuses of the ex-colonial power exercising systemic discrimination, disappears behind the smokescreen term ‘exclusion’, endowing it with a dimension of abstract necessity. It could be argued that this semantic shift is politically motivated. Sayad construes exclusion as a notion emerging around the process of naturalization, hence essentially connected to the question of nationality: for the sociologist, inclusion in the realm of nationality is primarily a political matter. In other words, while exclusion is often considered a ‘social’ phenomenon, the Sayadian approach views it as first and foremost a political gesture of denial of existence, structuring the foundations of the ‘political order’:

À considérer toutes les formes d’exclusion dont l’ordre politique s’est accompagné, on est en droit de se demander si pareille exclusion ne constitue pas un des fondements mêmes de cet ordre. L’exclusion sur la base de la nationalité n’est-elle pas nécessaire pour l’existence de la nationalité et, plus largement, l’exclusion politique d’un groupe social inclus dans la vie politique n’est-elle pas nécessaire pour l’existence du politique ?¹⁵⁰

Thus, the immigrant is an ‘a-political’ being because as a ‘non-national’ she/he is excluded from the sphere of belonging to the nation.¹⁵¹ While immigration may well remain restricted to the economic order – the principle rationale from the standpoint of capitalistic relations lying in creating an expendable workforce – naturalisation establishes a point of entry into the cultural and political order of the French nation via its nationality. Sayad establishes a dialectical relation between immigration and nation, with the process of naturalisation

¹⁴⁹ See Guénif-Souilamas (2006), *op. cit.*

¹⁵⁰ Sayad (2006), *L’immigration ou les paradoxes de l’altérité ; vol. 2 Les enfants illégitimes* (Paris: Raisons d’Agir), p 13.

¹⁵¹ Sayad (2004), *op. cit.*, p 224.

dissolving the former into the latter, in an assimilating fashion. An antinomic relation is hence drawn between on the one hand immigrants, viewed primarily as workers whose presence on French soil is temporary, subordinated to work and to political and ethnical neutrality; and on the other hand, newly naturalised *citizens*, part and parcel of the national order. While immigrants undergo institutional exclusion from politics (*de jure*), along with concrete, mundane exclusion of the political order of the nation (*de facto*), in theory naturalized citizens should not be liable to any form of exclusion. However as Sayad forcibly demonstrates, once naturalization happens, political exclusion is still forced upon the naturalized immigrants and their children at the more deeply problematic level of *identity*. This exclusion is further repressed and internalized as a collective identity crisis of the postcolonial generation, otherwise widely called ‘*second generation*’ immigrants (or *issus de l’immigration*). The latter absurd yet hegemonic expression carries in its very denotation an implied assumption of permanent illegitimacy and/or exclusion. Reproducing the political dominion of a ruling class via the exclusion of the children of ex-colonized immigrants – most often treated at best as second-class citizens, and frequently as the incarnation of the *other* – the *issu de l’immigration* (postcolonial) condition is constructed as a threat to the cohesion of the national myth, against which an alleged ‘French identity’ is built.¹⁵²

Eager to have a voice in the debate on citizenship, Mustapha Amokrane (a.k.a. Mouss from Mouss & Hakim, one of our ten collectives) defines it as a form of belonging – ‘*la citoyenneté, c’est d’en être*’.¹⁵³ The debate around citizenship crystallises the gist of resistance to this very exclusion: a struggle against the denial of immigrant condition and postcolonial identity. Equally, it could be observed that just as the notion of *exclusion* in France – social exclusion in particular – could be viewed as the blind spot against which citizenship is constructed, the *social question* and the issue of *political participation* have emerged as the two main *repressed terms of the debate* on integration. Integration is understood as an oppressive form of summoning (*injonction*) transmitted onto the postcolonial generation and imposed upon them. Along with the expression ‘second generation immigrants’, the term ‘minorities’ also carries an implied denotation of permanent illegitimacy. This is why for Sayad, the basic feature of resistance lies in the reclaiming of politics, insofar as ‘*exister, c’est exister politiquement*’:

Comment exister dans un ordre sociopolitique qui s’appelle la nation – même de cette existence mineure, accidentelle, inessentielle, toute chétive, étriquée, mutilée qu’on accorde aux immigrés – sans exister

¹⁵² See Citron, Suzanne (1989), *Le Mythe national. L’Histoire de France en question* (Paris: Les Éditions Ouvrières).

¹⁵³ Interview with Mustapha Amokrane (a.k.a. Mouss), Saint-Denis, 23rd June 2007.

politiquement ? Sans avoir une identité civile, *de jure* ? Il faut la complicité du politique et de la politesse pour opérer pareille exclusion: du politique, parce qu'il assure le monopole du politique exclusivement aux nationaux (surtout en France, où citoyenneté et nationalité sont une seule et même chose, l'une étant indissociable de l'autre); de la politesse ou de la neutralité politique, qui est aussi une neutralité éthique, parce qu'elle interdit à qui n'est pas du lieu (*i.e.* le non-national) d'intervenir dans la vie politique propre aux maîtres de céans, toute intervention en la matière ne pouvant apparaître que comme désordre, perturbation, voire subversion. C'est la même cécité au politique qui fait qu'un phénomène aussi fondamentalement politique que l'immigration – émigration de citoyens d'un côté et immigration de citoyens ou de futurs citoyens de l'autre – n'est jamais perçu et pensé comme tel, tout au moins au moment où il s'accomplit. On se refuse même, de part et d'autre, à l'envisager sous ce rapport, prenant de la sorte le parti d'être toujours en retard par rapport à la réalité du phénomène.¹⁵⁴

In that respect, the struggle Mouss & Hakim have been leading to have a voice in the debate around citizenship is already in itself a struggle for political existence. Along with the *Indigènes* initiative to form an political movement, the so-called 'second generation immigrants' have been fighting back in different ways to assert the existence of postcolonial discriminations and inequalities, thereby shaping their own political existence. Not unlike Fanon and Goffman, for the Mouvements des Indigènes de la République (MIR) the violence of institutionalised racism and the continuation of colonial ideology within the metropolitan territory lies in its ultimately dehumanizing effect insofar as it seeks to systematically establish a hierarchy of the human, predominantly divided along racial and ethnic faultlines, but also along the criterion of national origin.

The dissolving function of integration for the postcolonial generation

To Sayad, however desirable nationality may be for the immigrant, naturalization remains a form of 'gentle violence', a permanent reminder of the migrant's alienation inscribed in her/his very history, hence the mixed, contradictory feelings which can develop vis-à-vis nationality on behalf of the immigrant: 'Naturalization is disapproved of to the extent that it is a mark and an admission of alienation, as well as an adulteration and denial of one's basic being'.¹⁵⁵ Hence, the less the nationality which the immigrants betray is real, the more they would want to remain faithful to it. Not unlike naturalization, which lies at its root, Sayad hints at the national myth of 'integration' being essentially endowed with a discriminating, excluding, and ultimately dissolving function. Mustapha Amokrane underlined in interview the disintegrating, dissolving fundamental character of the

¹⁵⁴ Sayad (2006), *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Sayad (2004), p 251.

ideological mechanism of integration: '*L'intégration, je ne vois pas vraiment ce que c'est, ça n'existe pas. La désintégration en revanche, elle, est bien réelle*'.¹⁵⁶

Naturalization for the immigrant already holds the cumulated effect of a double domination: the old system of colonialism is perpetrated as sediment into the redeployment of hegemony after colonialism. This new system of ideological domination is essentially centred around the phenomenon of immigration. However, the postcolonial generation must confront the perpetration of those two cumulated effects, which are pushed into further sedimentation. Thus, the 'children of immigration' and 'grandchildren of colonization', initially endowed with both nationalities (French and Algerian, in Sayad's specific case study) feel trapped into a hybrid identity category of 'neither from here nor from there', or 'neither French nor foreign'. Becoming endowed with the role formerly assumed by the judicial apparatus deployed in the process of naturalization, the school apparatus enables the state to legitimize the children of immigration, thereby implicitly making them perpetually illegitimate.¹⁵⁷ As Sayad points out, and as is further expanded by Abdellali Hajjat in his reading of Sayad for the postcolonial generation, this 'double consciousness' generates a whole series of ambiguities and contradictions – often expressed in intergenerational conflict – and a paradoxical sense of disaffiliation from nationality on behalf of the 'second generation', wherein (Algerian, foreign) nationality – whether real or symbolic as a cultural legacy – is experienced as both stigma and integrity.¹⁵⁸

3.3 Resisting (dis)integration: cultural appropriation as empowerment

In that respect, the ideological apparatus of integration further entrenches an already existing phenomenon of assimilation and political exclusion (from nationality) exercised previously against migrant workers into systemic stigmatization, denying political existence – arguably one of the fiercest forms of symbolic violence – to their postcolonial children. Grappling with feelings of being victims of institutionalised discrimination, when confronted with stigma, the postcolonial generation has the same array of strategies of resistance available at their disposal that Goffman described in his study of stigma, generating their own set of oscillations and contradictions.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Mustapha Amokrane (a.k.a. Mouss), Saint-Denis, 23rd June 2007. On integration being a myth, see also See Guénif-Souilamas, Nacira (2006), *op.cit.*

¹⁵⁷ Sayad (2004), *op. cit.*, pp 225-248.

¹⁵⁸ Hajjat, Abdellali (2005), *Immigration postcoloniale et mémoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan), pp 65-94.

¹⁵⁹ See Goffman (1986), *Stigma* and previous development *infra*.

Strategies of rebellion against the postcolonial stigma

Sayad highlights the plight of sedimentation. Interestingly enough, in spite of appearances of greater ‘integration’ it embeds deeper rather than relieves symbolic domination for the children of colonization and immigration:

[A]ppearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the position they occupy in the field for symbolic power relations is even more dominated and more critical than the position occupied by their parents. Unlike the traditional immigrant, who could delude himself that he was ‘not involved’ and ignore the very process of stigmatization, they can neither abandon the game in which they are involved, nor even pretend that it does not concern them. All they can do is accept (willingly or with resignation, submission or angrily) the dominant definition, or that given by the dominant, of their identity.¹⁶⁰

To the sociologist this objective alienation tends to trigger a double bind of oscillation between on the one hand assimilating tendencies, and on the other hand, self-excluding impulses of autonomous self-definition along the lines of a stigmatized specific identity. Ultimately, both reactions are translated into political strategies of rebellion against postcolonial alienation:

One of the laws of social physics is that stigmatization will provoke a rebellion against the stigma. The rebellion begins with the public reappropriation of the stigma, which thus becomes an emblem: ‘I am Algerian – I am an immigrant and I am proud to be an immigrant.’ It should end with the establishment of a group formed on the basis of the stigma, or which is, in other words, to a large extent a product of the economic and social effects of the stigmatization.¹⁶¹

Sayad reads the issue of self-denomination as a form, or first step towards a re-appropriation of one’s own identity. In that respect, a constitution into autonomous groups takes place along several identifying criteria, all distinctive forms of discrimination the immigrants and their children have to undergo: territorial (*banlieue*), religious (Muslim), ethnic (Black, Arab, Maghrebi, Berber, Kabyle, etc), national (Malian, Senegalese, Algerian, Tunisian, etc), or cultural (‘oriental’, *immigré*, or via artistic identification, such as hip hop typically). In a sense, this collective self-denomination process uncannily mirrors anti-colonial struggle for political self-determination. This re-appropriation underlies the multiplicity of associative networks reclaiming their specific stigmatized identity, as in the case for instance – to only name a few among a myriad of examples – of the *Conseil Représentatif des Associatif Noires* (CRAN), *Collectif des Musulmans de France* (CMF), *Fédération des Tunisiens pour une Citoyenneté des deux-Rives* (FTCR), *Association des Travailleurs Maghrébins de France* (ATMF), or the *Fédération des Association de Solidarité avec les Travailleurs-euses Immigré-e-s* (FASTI).¹⁶² Those groups are often constituted around a common stigma they

¹⁶⁰ Sayad (2004), *ibid.*, p 256.

¹⁶¹ Sayad (2004), p 255.

¹⁶² See respectively <http://lecran.org/>; <http://www.lecmf.fr/>; <http://www.citoyensdesdeuxrives.eu/better/>; <http://www.atmf.org/>; and <http://www.fasti.org/>

undertake to struggle against, or come to terms with. This tends to endow them with a militant dimension, a sense of resistance to the diktat of integration, positing an underlying or embryonic form of politics at the heart of their very fabric.

However, Sayad also underlines the shortcomings of both assimilation and autonomous self-definition for the children of colonization, who can only displace the alienation instead of transcending it:

Their only alternative is to try – when, that is, they do not both at the same time – to assimilate thanks to a subtle game of bluff that is designed to conceal the stigma, or at least to mask its most obvious external signs. As is always the case in struggles against stigmatization and the domination that is one of its major effects – for a *self-identity* (a national identity or some other identity), and in struggles to achieve an *autonomous* self-definition – in other words to define the principles that define the social worlds in terms of one's interests (material and symbolic) – the outcome is usually nothing more than an inverted reproduction of the stigma attached to the representation they are trying to fight. Is inverting, as though thanks to some magical operation, the relationship of heteronomy and the work of hetero-definition from which all the dominated suffer equivalent to creating and imposing the autonomy, self-determination and self-definition they are trying to win? A purely symbolic negation of the one is not enough actually to establish the other.¹⁶³

Building on from the opposition already delineated by Fanon between assimilation and revolt, Sayad identifies two main reactions to the stigma of postcolonial exclusion – *recognition* on the one hand, and *subversion* of one's stigmatized identity on the other hand. The latter is a reformulation of the principle of reversal of the stigma as in the case of *négritude*. However, as Sayad notes, although the minority, or *banlieue* population grapples and oscillates between the two strategies to step out of this double bind, none of them seem sufficient to go beyond the predicament in which the postcolonial subject finds her/himself locked. For while the only possible outcome of subverting of the stigma comes down to a mere inversion of it, failing to truly exceed it, the aspiration to recognition necessarily entails a degree of self-denial of one's own specific (stigmatized) identity, a form of self-denial, hence a denial by one's own peers as the price of recognition:

The difficult, if not impossible, choice here is one between different strategies: those of recognition and of subversion. The former involve the recognition of the criteria of judgement that base identity on a legitimate foundation; the latter attempt, by attacking symbolic power relations, to invert the scale of values that authorizes stigmatization, rather than to erase stigmatized features.¹⁶⁴

An excellent illustration of the autonomist form of rebellion, the political initiative of the aforementioned Mouvement des Indigènes de la République (MIR) is an example of reversal of the stigma. In the MIR's rhetoric, the minority stigma is no longer perceived as an identity of exclusion and non-integration but turned into an identifying emblem of cultural, and

¹⁶³ Sayad, A. (2004), p 256.

¹⁶⁴ Sayad, A. (2004), p 256-257.

ultimately political, integrity. Their political line departs from an angry form of resentment against the unequal treatment perpetrated beyond naturalization.

*Beyond alienating assimilation and self-inflicted exclusion:
autonomous political expressions of resistance*

This radical rejection of the assimilating approach of integration can also be found in a multiplicity of artistic expressions, particularly in *rap conscient*. For an illustration of this double bind and to replace theory into the context of our study of music and politics, we could mention Sniper as one amongst many cases of disproportionate controversies, ideological repression and trials for libel triggered by a number of *rap conscient* artists when expressing a rejection of the integration model. Deploying fierce anger against ‘the system’ generally, ‘France’ or ‘the Republic’ who betrayed her promises of equality between all citizens, the track ‘La France’ by Sniper stands completely in that tendency. It politicises a rage against institutionalised racism and the systemic political discrimination against *banlieue* and ethnic minorities:

La France est une garce et on s'est fait trahir
Le système voilà ce qui nous pousse à les haïr
La haine c'est ce qui rend nos propos vulgaires
On nique la France sous une tendance de musique populaire
On est d'accord et on se moque des répressions
On se fout de la république et de la liberté d'expression
Faudrait changer les lois et pouvoir voir
Bientôt à l'Élysée des Arabes et des Noirs au pouvoir.¹⁶⁵

Following the release of their album in 2001, the band was sued by the state for libelling the values of the Republic, an exemplary form of ideological disciplining.¹⁶⁶ Notwithstanding the outcome – in the end discharged by the Rouen Court of Appeal in 2005 – the reaction which this track generated, along with the number of trials for libelling the Republic’s ISAs, illustrates the acute tension and contradictions around those questions and the extent to which the issue of equality has become central for the postcolonial, ‘subaltern’ proletariat, or ‘sub-proletariat’ to use Sayad’s terms:

In the same way, immigrants, who are ‘sub-proletarians’ in the order of identity, inevitably attempt to reconcile the twofold benefits of, on the one hand, a heterogeneity that is desired, total and totally original, and, on the other, of no longer being obliged to submit themselves in a heteronymous way, and therefore to force themselves to undertake the work of correction – which is experienced as shame – needed if they are to obtain and be awarded marks for good behaviour.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Sniper, ‘La France’, *Du rire aux larmes* (Desh Music, 2001).

¹⁶⁶ For more details on the specific lyrics incriminated and outcome of trial, see:

<http://lci.tf1.fr/france/2005-12/rappeurs-sniper-relaxes-4861078.html>

¹⁶⁷ Sayad, A. (2004), p 256.

Interestingly enough, the split between the two strategies (recognition vs. subversion) informed a lot of the grassroots activist expressions of political discontent encountered during our empirical investigation, although it did not directly correlate along the same lines of division. Although most groups oscillated between the two strategies and created their own hybrid approach to political and cultural resistance, a divide was observed between a ‘politics of recognition’ approach and a ‘politics of redistribution’ tradition, resorting to both reactions (recognition, subversion) and undertaking to generate out of them a tactic of re-appropriation of symbolic power, an initial step into a form of politics.¹⁶⁸ Groups such as Voukoum or Moleque de Rua embody the ‘politics of recognition’ strategy, asserting that ‘*créer c’est résister*’. While this looks like another example of reversal of the stigma (subversion), the ultimate aim of social recognition here is to fight against denial and reclaim the right to existence as already valid political claims. Other groups, such as Jolie Môme could be located more in the tradition of a ‘politics of redistribution’, reclaiming a subversion of the current order of things in a more egalitarian fashion. At a political or explicitly militant level, groups and initiatives such as Mouvement de l’Immigration et des Banlieues (MIB) and Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires (FSQP) incarnate this dynamic of rebellion against the stigma, undertaking to go beyond this aporia.¹⁶⁹

Conclusion. Postcolonial politics as revolutionary *Aufhebung*

A pivotal stake, the claim of equality elicits a movement beyond the limits and the double bind of the dual strategy of recognition vs. subversion, thereby reconfiguring a radical sense of resistance on a broader scale – in other words, a redeployment of the radical figure of the subaltern. Aiming to push Sayad’s analysis further to bring it to the crucial stage of politics, Abdellali Hajjat attempted to conceptualise this sublation around this political paradigm of equality. Summoned to follow this integration creed (*injonction à l’intégration*) the postcolonial generation feels trapped between the self-hating strategy of ‘assimilation’ and the over-protective tactic of ‘exclusive withdrawal’ (*repli exclusif*) on their communities.¹⁷⁰ As argued above, both reactions are equally unsatisfactory. As in the case of reversal of stigma, those two stances are fundamentally shaped by elements imposed

¹⁶⁸ As will be examined in more details below (see Chapter III).

¹⁶⁹ See <http://mibmib.free.fr/>; <http://mib34.com/>; and <http://www.fsqp.fr/> See also Boubeker, A. & Hajjat, A. (2008), *Histoire politique des immigrations (post)coloniales* for more detailed accounts of the history of political mobilisations of immigrant and (post)colonial populations of France.

¹⁷⁰ Hajjat (2005), *op. cit.*, p 88.

from the outside, from the standpoint of the hegemonic dominant. Nevertheless Hajjat sees a sublation of this contradiction in the position of ‘opened withdrawal’ (*repli d’ouverture*) generating political resistance. Political identity should not be merely asserted, but to become political per se, it needs to be legitimized and acknowledged. In other words, postcolonial communities need to organise politically around a form of opened autonomy, namely a relative or temporary space of autonomy to build a collective political force, a counter-hegemony which will eventually be inscribed on the legitimate space of French politics.

Thus the task for the postcolonial generation is to generate a self-determined reconfiguration of this ‘sub-proletariat’ (Sayad). As proved by Fanon, as a field of research and experimentation where the political can take shape in a more fluid, complex and dynamic form, grassroots counterculture can become a key space of struggle to implement this process. Endowing postcolonial communities with a form of semi-autonomy, musical expressions can be employed to assert or maintain collective identity and struggle against political assimilation. Politics is already at the heart of this process. As we will explore into more details below, musical expressions of resistance in postcolonial France appear as significant pregnant forms of revolutionary *Aufhebung*. Arguably, they also form part and parcel of the transformations of the collectivist ideal slowly surfacing in contemporary France, aiming to take the specific coordinates of postcolonial oppression into account. This reconfiguration is essentially articulated around the key watchwords of *justice* and *equality*. To return to the market-organisation opposition, this dynamic is also a fundamental mainspring for the emergence of cultural resistance from the point of view of ‘organisation’. In the following chapter, we will now turn to the ‘market’ perspective to explore how cultural resistance is deployed within the sphere of the market.

Chapter II.

The dialectics of emancipation: music as a praxis of empowerment

1. Art@ inc.: the inter-penetration of capitalism and counterculture

- 1.1 The commodification of culture: fetishism in music industries
- 1.2 Capitalist incorporation: counterculture and the myth of co-optation

2. Concentration and co-optation in the music industry in France

- 2.1 Oligopoly and concentration: brief overview of the record industry in France
- 2.2 Majors vs. independent labels? Inter-penetration and co-optation

3. Musical practices of empowerment

- 3.1 Artistic practice or political praxis?
- 3.2 Hypotheses for empirical investigation

On est devenu des consommateurs génétiquement modifiés
Cobaye en expériences scientifiquement élaborées
Après des manipulations transgéniques multiples
Voilà qu'on se met à aimer la nouvelle pop star académique
On se met à regarder son dernier clip en boucle en scrod
Pour pas se faire chambrer parce que c'est la honte quand même
Et même si c'est indigeste même si c'est dégueulasse
Avec un bon Mac do et un verre de Coca ça passe
Et allongés dans notre canapé on en perd pas une miette
On crie au scandale mais pas question de changer de chaîne
[...] Elevés à la soupe chimique et à la merde en grains
On nous gave, on nous conditionne, on nous engraine
Et même le consommateur plus averti sait se mettre en boîte
« Mais c'est d'la merde ! »
Ouais mais c'est ça qui tourne en boîte

Donnez nous du vrai et pas de l'artificiel,
On veut du fat, du frais, et pas de l'industriel
On veut du sain, du « sah », du produit naturel
Du bio, du hallal, et pas du commercial

S'il fallait ingurgiter ce qu'ils nous servent sur TF1
Ya longtemps que j'aurais entamé une grève de la faim
C'est pas que je faire mon difficile mon blasé ma fine bouche
Mais ras le bol de leur soupe industrielle servie à la louche
De leur yaourt indigeste à dégueuler dans les chiottes
De leur nouvelle star en toc fabriquée dans un loft
Faudrait que José Bové à la rescousse vienne nous aider
Les artistes OGM mettent notre santé en danger
Je veux de l'artisanal, du bon pain au son à l'ancienne
Pas comme ces tubes pop corn qu'on nous fabrique à la chaîne
Denrées périssables à ne pas conserver plus de trois semaines
Tu sais les kleenex que t'achètes, t'ouvres t'écoutes et tu jettes
Emmenez-moi au bout de la terre sur une île déserte
Pas de filles en bikini pas de caméraman
Seul avec mon walk-man, avec mes disques de Bob Marley d'Aznavor et d'Iam.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ MAP, 'Donnez-nous', *Debout là-d'dans* (2006).

As brilliantly underlined by MAP through their use of exaggerations and their relentless sense of humour, the industrialisation of culture is one of the most common motifs of discontent among cultural activists and consumers alike. Pervasive across all sections of society, this assessment of industrial music discarded for being *inauthentic* and *commercial* usually stems from a revolt against consumer society. Famously summarised by thinkers like Theodore Roszak or Herbert Marcuse, this narrative is one of most widespread forms of critique of capitalism since its inception in 1960s American counterculture.¹⁷² For the common critic of ‘commercial music’, the logic of the market prevailing in cultural production is exposed for providing the cultural consumer with an artificial, manufactured experience wherein profit prevails, as opposed to a true reflection of the human condition. The trigger of revolt here is that culture is no longer a human experience but becomes a mundane commodity to be bought and sold. In fact, this taps into Marx’s analysis of commodity fetishism insofar as within the market logic, culture is turned into a commodity. Arguably, from there *counterculture* emerges primarily as a reaction against the alienating artificiality of the cultural commodity and an alternative to mainstream, capitalist culture.

As outlined above, the twin Marxian framework of superstructure/base generates a contradistinction between the two poles of *market* and *organisation*, between history and structure, between cultural resistance as identity empowerment on the one hand, and counterculture as decommodification on the other hand. The present chapter shall focus on the *market* pole, discussing the inter-penetration of counterculture and capitalism within the music industry. Our analysis will undertake to demystify the over-simplistic normative discourse underlying the analysis of co-optation. Building on a long tradition started in the 1930s and consolidated in the 1960s, the dominant, customary perception offered by critics scholarly and non-scholarly alike is a general sense of co-optation. This perspective contends that counterculture always sells out as it is eventually absorbed by mainstream culture. Yet if culture is always absorbed by the market and rebellion co-opted, does this mean counterculture is doomed to fail from its inception?

In the following pages we will examine the inter-penetration of market and cultural production, assessing a few significant theories to establish what capitalism entails for cultural appropriation. Coherent with our initial materialist framework a lot of useful discussions have taken place within the Marxist tradition, ranging from the Frankfurt School

¹⁷² See Marcuse, Herbert (2002), *One-Dimensional Man* (London: Routledge) ; Roszak, Theodore (1995), *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

to more contemporary analyses of the art industry as a corporate enterprise. Narrowing down our focus to music, we will then look at the global economic concentration, pressure and constraints imposed on cultural production in contemporary France, spearheaded by the multinational corporations of the music industry – i.e., the so-called ‘*majors*’. Finally, from the contradictions and antinomies surfacing in cultural production we will delineate the theoretical contours of a space of empowering resistance in musical practice, before raising some key questions and sketching general hypotheses to be explored in empirical investigation.

1. Art© inc.: the inter-penetration of capitalism and counterculture

An essential mainspring of resistance to the hegemony of mainstream culture, counterculture seeks to establish counter-hegemony, but is confronted to the constraints of the market, and permanently risks getting co-opted in the process. To account for this incorporation a lot of cultural studies critics have put forward the ‘sell-out’ argument. This explanation contends that counterculture becomes ‘contaminated’ from being in contact with cultural industries, or ‘perverted’ as a victim of its own success. However this narrative has been challenged by alternative analyses on counterculture, most notably Tom Frank, which have highlighted the inter-penetration of capitalism and counterculture. This means counterculture cannot ignore or do away with cultural commodification insofar as cultural production is bound to be permeated by market forces. We will now briefly retrace the steps of cultural commodification, departing from Marx’s notion of commodity fetishism and surveying the Frankfurt School analysis of cultural industries, in order to locate and situate the emergence of counterculture from a theoretical angle.

1.1 The commodification of culture: fetishism in music industries

Commodity fetishism as alienation, reification as objective domination

Furthering his earlier reflections on alienation, in *Capital* Marx conceived the notion of commodity fetishism.¹⁷³ While alienation underlies the foundation of capitalism, structuring the relations of production and hence enabling domination and exploitation, the concept of commodity fetishism further examines how a product of human labour is endowed with an ‘enigmatical character’ once it is turned into a commodity:

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it is capable of satisfying human wants, or from the point that those properties are the product of human labour. It is as clear as noon-day, that man, by his industry, changes the forms of the materials furnished by Nature, in such a way as to make them useful to him. [...]

Whence, then, arises the enigmatical character of the product of labour, so soon as it assumes the form of commodities? Clearly from this form itself. The equality of all sorts of human labour is expressed objectively by their products all being equally values; the measure of the expenditure of labour-power by the duration of that expenditure, takes the form of the quantity of value of the products of labour; and finally the mutual relations of the producers, within which the social character of their labour affirms itself, take the form of a social relation between the products.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Marx’s analysis of commodity fetishism was elaborated mainly on a critique of the Hegelian concept of alienation. See Marx, Karl (1977), *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: CUP).

¹⁷⁴ Marx, Karl (1992), *Capital* I.1, section 4 (London: Penguin)

Through the process of commodity exchange, the commodity form obliterates the social character of the product of human labour, namely the very origin of the process, turning the social relations between people into objectified relationships between things. The mysterious character of the commodity, or *fetishism*, hence arises insofar as, through commodity exchange, the social relation no longer takes place between the producers exchanging products of labour but directly between the objects themselves, hence alienating the producers from social relations:

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses.¹⁷⁵

Marx takes the analogy of eyesight, depicting in details the physical mechanics of seeing with the passage of light, to explain the misperception and discrepancy which take place in the process of fetishism:

In the same way the light from an object is perceived by us not as the subjective excitation of our optic nerve, but as the objective form of something outside the eye itself. But, in the act of seeing, there is at all events, an actual passage of light from one thing to another, from the external object to the eye. There is a physical relation between physical things. But it is different with commodities. There, the existence of the things qua commodities, and the value-relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connection with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.¹⁷⁶

In social terms, commodity fetishism appears as an extremely powerful tenet of capitalism insofar as not only does it mask class domination but it also facilitates the reproduction of ruling class power by generating self-alienation. Marshall Berman construes the fetishism of commodities as a deterministic myth 'designed to conserve the existing order by convincing the people in it that they can do no other. By picturing themselves as unfree, men make themselves unfree: their prophecy of powerlessness is self-fulfilling'.¹⁷⁷ The logic depicted by Berman lays at the heart of the ideological redeployment of capitalism in the late 1970s. '*There is no alternative*', a motto famously expressed by Thatcher in the 1980s heralding the rise of neoliberalism, aimed to act as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

¹⁷⁵ Marx (1992), *ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Marx (1992), *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Berman, Marshall (1963) *Adventures in Marxism* (London: Verso), p 45.

Logically then, for the proletariat, the question of emancipation becomes necessarily tied to that of power appropriation. Thus the exploited counter that summon of powerlessness with the opposite rhetoric of empowerment, in order to build a self-fulfilling resistance based on the *altermondialiste* hope that ‘another world is possible’. This involves breaking away from the alienation generated by fetishism, and more generally, from what Lukács called reification of consciousness. In others words, to prevail capitalism operates a mystification of consciousness resorting to culture, everyday life habits and social relations and turning them into fetishes. Departing from the concept of commodity fetishism to expand it beyond the mere economic realm, Lukács developed the notion of *reification*. Deriving its structure from the Weberian categories of rationalization and bureaucracy, Lukács set the process of reification as not only a paradigmatic form of capitalism, but also the hidden dynamic underlying the spirit of capitalism, permeating all spheres of social life.¹⁷⁸ Not unlike Marx’s notion of fetishism, Lukács’s concept features the alienation of the worker in capitalist production, insofar as his ‘own activity, his own labour becomes something objective and independent of him’.¹⁷⁹ But it also entails a reification of consciousness implying ‘the fate of the atomized, fragmented, reduced worker [also] becomes the typical human fate in capitalist society’.¹⁸⁰

All in all, the Marxian notion of commodity fetishism and the Lukácsian concept of reification seem fundamental to understanding the mainspring of cultural resistance. The ideological crucible of ‘intersubjective traditions, meanings, values, institutions, rituals, customs and typical activities characteristic in space and time of a given social formation’, culture is hence positioned by Lukács as a part and parcel of the modern capitalist system.¹⁸¹ As discussed below, approaches developed by Frankfurt School scholars have stressed the role of culture in producing legitimating beliefs for political domination.¹⁸² In that sense, counterculture, or cultural resistance, reacts primarily against this form of domination. Yet domination also takes place in the very process of market exchange itself: not only as exploitation, but also as a characteristic of capitalism that all substantial communities

¹⁷⁸ For Weber, as the most efficient mode of organisation of all spheres of life, bureaucracy logically stems from rationalism, and hence rationalization of the state always takes the form of bureaucracy. See Weber, Max (1992) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge), esp. section 2 (pp 13-38). See also Lukács, Georg (1971), *History and Class Consciousness* (London: The Merlin Press), pp 83-95.

¹⁷⁹ Lukács (1971), *ibid.*, p 88.

¹⁸⁰ Arato, Andrew (2002), ‘Esthetic Theory and Cultural Criticism’ in Arato Andrew & Gebhart, Eike eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company), pp 185-224: p 196.

¹⁸¹ Arato (2002), *ibid.*, p 185.

¹⁸² See in particular Horkheimer, Max (1949), ‘Authority and the Family Today’, in Anshen, Ruth Nanda ed., *The Family: Its Function and Destiny* (New York: Harper), pp 359-374.

...disintegrate under the onslaught of the market, competition and large-scale, industrial division of labor, forcing the subordination of the newly freed individuals to a new system of mechanically objective dependence [...] masked by a system of exchange of things, i.e. commodities.¹⁸³

Insofar as domination and exploitation of labour become anonymous when '*the social connection of persons is transposed into a social relation between things*', counterculture also reacts against the inauthenticity of capitalism and the alienating nature of commodity fetishism, and the objective – hence concealed – character of domination.¹⁸⁴

Cultural commodification and the genealogy of creative industries

While Lukács's concept of reification builds on Marx, Adorno's analysis of cultural industries is useful to look at reification within the field of cultural production itself. The mere linguistic substitution of 'cultural industries' by the term 'creative industries' that occurred in the last decade marks the economic globalisation of culture and the concentration of this economic sector, whereby cultural industries are now generally inscribed in the avant-garde of globalised concentration of capital.¹⁸⁵ According to Howkins, creative industries comprise '[t]he sum total of four sectors: the copyright, the patent, trademark, and design industries'.¹⁸⁶ Cultural industries are now considered by cultural economy scholars as an adjunct-sector of the creative industries, including activities such as tourism, sports, outdoor activities and a variety of 'way of life' activities.¹⁸⁷

Undeniably linked to new media, globalisation and the knowledgeable economy, the term was initially theorised in the 1930s by Frankfurt School scholars Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno who analysed the rise of cultural industries. Raising the question of resistance to the domination of the market, the Frankfurt School analysis of cultural industries elaborates on Marx's notion of commodity fetishism. Arguing that the cultural industry commodifies and standardises all art, Adorno takes up the Lukácsian concept of reification to complement the Marxian notion of commodity fetishism and applies it to the realm of culture. In the essay 'On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', Adorno argues that 'musical fetishism' is what dominates the modern production of music, seen as a mere commodity to be bought and sold, ultimately affecting its reception and alienating the audience from critical capacity:

¹⁸³ Arato (2002), *ibid.*, p 190.

¹⁸⁴ Arato (2002), *ibid.*, p 190.

¹⁸⁵ This is why I use of the term 'global cultural industries' to account for contemporary creative industries.

¹⁸⁶ See Howkins, John (2001), *The Creative Economy: How People make Money from Ideas* (London: Allen Lane), p xiii.

¹⁸⁷ See Howkins (2001), *op. cit.*

The concept of musical fetishism cannot be psychologically derived. That 'values' are consumed and draw feelings to themselves, without their specific qualities being reached by the consciousness of the consumer, is a later expression of their commodity character. For all contemporary musical life is dominated by the commodity form; the pre-capitalist residues have been eliminated. Music, with all the attributes of the ethereal and the sublime, which are generously accorded it, serves in America today as an advertisement for commodities which one must acquire in order to be able to hear music.¹⁸⁸

While the concept of commodification of culture now permeates and underlies any analysis of cultural production, Adorno was one of the first to denounce the ideology of cultural consumerism:

The consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself has paid for the ticket to the Toscanini concert. He has literally 'made' the success which he reifies and accepts as an objective criterion, without recognizing himself in it. But he has not 'made' it by liking the concert, but rather by buying the ticket.¹⁸⁹

Adorno builds again on the Marxian law of value to apply it to cultural goods. Objectifying the listener as she/he is defined according to objects that have a value, ultimately dehumanizing her/him, the specific power of exchange-value in the realm of cultural goods is to endow commodities with the appearance of immediacy, which is the very source of their exchange-value:

The appearance of immediacy is as strong as the compulsion of exchange-value is inexorable. The social compact harmonizes the contradiction. The appearance of immediacy takes possession of the mediated, exchange-value itself. If the commodity in general combines exchange-value and use-value, then pure use-value, whose illusions the cultural good must preserve in completely capitalist society, must be replaced by pure exchange-value, which precisely in its capacity as exchange-value deceptively takes over the function of use-value. The specific fetish-character of music lies in this *quid pro quo*. [...] The more inexorably the principle of exchange-value destroys use-value for human beings, the more deeply does exchange-value disguise itself as the object of enjoyment.¹⁹⁰

To Adorno, the reification of cultural goods ultimately destroys musical form itself in 'affect[ing the] internal structure' of the object.¹⁹¹

Characteristic of the industrial capitalist age, this vicious cycle does not only alienate human beings, but also affects the very nature of culture, as the market commodity becomes the overwhelming defining feature of culture. Bearing in mind the base-superstructure Marxian articulation, capitalism can be considered from the perspective of ideology (*superstructure*) or that of political economy centred on the market (*base*). Derived from their analysis of ideology, Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony and Bourdieu's notion of *symbolic power* discussed above seem strongly connected to the Adornian application of commodity fetishism to culture.

¹⁸⁸ See Adorno, Theodor (2002), 'On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', in Arato, Andrew & Gebhardt, Eike eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, pp 270-299: p 278.

¹⁸⁹ Adorno (2002), *ibid.*, pp 278-279.

¹⁹⁰ Adorno (2002), *op. cit.*

¹⁹¹ Adorno (2002), *ibid.* p 281.

In this interpretive context, wherein culture has been transformed into the very building block of consumer capitalism, it becomes difficult to even conceive of a form of cultural resistance against the dominant capitalist system. The notion of counterculture, seen as a realm autonomous from that of capitalistic production, emerges in the late 1960s as a conceptual tool of resistance to capitalist domination.¹⁹² From there also emerged the idea that cultural resistance under the form of counterculture was doomed to be co-opted, incorporated to mainstream consumerist culture. While some scholars (Frank, Heath & Potter) have advocated co-optation to be a myth, the idea of incorporation of counterculture, or *recuperation*, is still found to be relevant by some culture resistance activists. In one of her debut tracks for instance, Keny Arkana takes a fierce stand against recuperation of hip hop:

L'rap a perdu ses esprits, impossible à raisonner
 Un peu comme hypnotisé
 A croire que les jolies paillettes l'ont impressionné
 Récupéré dans leur camp pour mieux l'emprisonner
 Eh l'rap tes Soldats s'entretuent, n'oublie pas ta mission eh yo !....

Qui prétend faire du rap sans prendre position?!
 Eh l'rap! tes Soldats s'entretuent, ont perdu leur mission¹⁹³

To Keny Arkana, authentic hip hop practice implies taking a stand, in a word a critique of the world around her or mild form of resistance.

1.2 Capitalist incorporation: counterculture and the myth of co-optation

If she also holds accountable the poor ethos and individual responsibility of rappers for that much regretted recuperation downfall, Keny Arkana clearly bestows the co-optation of counterculture onto the music business and cultural industries. In the following section we will explore this debate into more details.

Postmodernism as ideological justification of neoliberal co-optation

The rise of the post-industrial mode of production popularised culture and effaced the modernist boundaries as a process of social normalisation. Against the backdrop of what Mandel labels 'late capitalism', postmodernist discourse states that there can be no single unified discourse that in a modernist fashion would 'conjoin the ephemeral and the fleeting

¹⁹² See Roszak (1995), *ibid.*

¹⁹³ Keny Arkana, 'Le rap a perdu ses esprits', *L'esquisse* (2005).

with the eternal and the immutable'.¹⁹⁴ In that sense, postmodernism was viewed as a rupture from modernist establishment ideology. However, post-structuralism which bears deconstruction and plurality at its core, enabling reading as a constant re-writing and repetition as a form of difference, carries an ambiguous ideological message – de-historicisation. A profound questioning of the historical materialist perspective, de-historicisation could in its very consciousness of the non-holistic aspect of theory contribute to the Baudrillardian celebration of surface and depthlessness.¹⁹⁵ Yet this type of perspective significantly reinforces the continuation of the logic of a consumerist, commodified society where reality is transformed into images, and time is only envisaged as a 'series of perpetual presents'.¹⁹⁶ The dynamics of postmodernity then seems to confine thinking into a tautological aporia, wherein cultural resistance under the form of counterculture seems to be doomed to incorporation to mainstream, consumerist culture. We will focus now on the theoretical space for counterculture and locate the blind spot where cultural resistance can develop. To do so, we will explore through an accurate analysis of the dynamic of counterculture how the opposition to mainstream, and in particular to business culture is not only a myth, but also a driving force of capitalism.

The myth of co-optation:

the interdependence of counterculture and business culture

As proved by Tom Frank in his outstanding account of advertising from the 1960s to current times, the countercultural critique has entertained the myth of co-optation of counterculture.¹⁹⁷ Yet to understand the perpetual need of counterculture to reinvent a new form of resistance to corporate culture, a reversal of the assumed logic must be operated. Frank examines the tight interrelation between corporate, mainstream, mass culture and a so-called *counterculture*, portraying the latter as not opposed but interdependent with business culture. His meticulous study of the 1960s managerial revolution taking place at the same time as the 'countercultural youth revolution' breaks the myth of the incorporation of counterculture by business culture. American business underwent its own cultural revolution

¹⁹⁴ Harvey, David (1990), *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwells), p 10.

¹⁹⁵ See Baudrillard, Jean (1999) *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: Sage) ; *The System of Objects* (London: Verso, 2005).

¹⁹⁶ Jameson, Fredric (1998), *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London: Verso), p 20.

¹⁹⁷ See Frank, Tom (1997), *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (London & Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

in the 1960s, a process that paralleled, and in many ways even anticipated, the broader cultural upheavals of the decade. Focusing on developments in advertising and men's fashion, Frank complicates standard notions of hippie innocence and corporate venality to offer a complex and compelling analysis of the dynamic nature of capitalism and the ways it foresees, deflects, eviscerates and absorbs alternative value systems:

Postwar American capitalism was hardly the unchanging and soulless machine imagined by countercultural leaders; it was as dynamic a force in its own way as the revolutionary youth movements of the period, undertaking dramatic transformations of both the way it operated and the way it imagined itself.¹⁹⁸

Many narratives of the 1960s remember the relationship between business and counterculture as a process of gradual co-optation as capitalism cynically created an ersatz version of the authentically rebellious youth movement. This is typically how the hippie subculture is narrated, but as the example of Keny Arkana mentioned above illustrates, this cliché is rather banal and still widespread in contemporary French youth counterculture, viewed as co-opted by mainstream business culture. As Frank shows though, the two cultures are interdependent. In fact key elements within American business, notably advertising, had begun formulating their own critique of the post-World War II business culture several years before the development of the counterculture. In significant ways, this emergent business culture articulated the same anxieties that would motivate counterculture: fear of conformity and alienation and, ironically, revulsion at the manipulation of consumerism. Consequently, the mass society of the 1950s, of which advertising was only one example, did not go unchallenged. A number of critics, such as David Riesman, William Whyte, John Kenneth Galbraith and Vance Packard, expressed dissatisfaction with the sterility of American culture and the manipulative nature of consumerism:

As it turns out, many in American business [...] imagined the counterculture not as an enemy to be undermined or a threat to consumer culture but as a hopeful sign, a symbolic ally in their own struggles against the dead-weight mountains procedure and hierarchy that had accumulated over the years.¹⁹⁹

At the beginning in the early 1960s, the creative revolution increasingly identified itself with youth. This focus only partly derived from an attempt to capture the youth market. More importantly, *youth* symbolized an attitude, a break with the old patterns of conformity, an emphasis on the new and exciting. Therefore the image of youth could be applied to a variety of products not necessarily aimed at young people. Stressing youth as a form of rebellion against the conservatism of the old order, advertisers of the creative revolution viewed the

¹⁹⁸ Frank (1997), *ibid.*, p 6.

¹⁹⁹ Frank (1997), *ibid.*, p 9

counterculture that began to emerge in the second half of the decade with sympathy. They adopted many of the trappings of the counterculture: psychedelic graphics, rock music and hip fashions. And if this vision of the counterculture remained superficial and unconvincing to those actually involved in the youth culture (as it did), it did not matter for the advertisers because young people were not necessarily the primary intended audience.

As Frank shows, the development of hip consumerism is the story of the adaptability of consumer capitalism. In that respect paradoxically enough, ‘rebellion’ – which Frank defines as ‘a sort of Nietzschean antinomianism, an automatic questioning of rules, a rejection of whatever social prescriptions we’ve happened to inherit’ – becomes the best criteria of adaptability.²⁰⁰ Recognizing the validity of critiques of 1950s mass society, representatives of the advertising and fashion industries sought to speak to those who felt alienated and craved authenticity. Industry representatives, particularly younger people dissatisfied with the bureaucratic and creative strictures on their work, articulated their own variation on the frustrations of living in a consumer society. But in this view, the solution to such problems lay in increased consumption. And as Frank argues, in the period since the 1960s, hip consumerism has become the dominant ethos for ‘transform[ing] alienation and despair into consent’.²⁰¹ With its emphasis on self-fulfilment and immediate gratification, on the new and revolutionary as opposed to the stodgy and conformist, counterculture did not need to be co-opted. It was already firmly within the value system of consumer capitalism.

The two Canadian scholars Heath and Potter take this commodification of dissent argument one step further, examining the issue of counterculture under a slightly different angle.²⁰² After investigating the reasons for the constant failure of countercultural rebellion, they denounce the libertarian drift of resistance to capitalism as doomed to fail because ‘the theory of society on which the countercultural idea rests is false’. They underline the paradox onto which the postmodern dynamic of counterculture rests – a denunciation of a totalising metanarrative as the driving force of an absolute and systemic opposition to this whole, which can in its turn be looked at in a totalising, unifying way: ‘There is no single, overarching system, [...and t]he culture cannot be jammed because there *is* no such thing as “the culture” or “the system”’.²⁰³ To the authors, it is crucial to determine a distinction between *dissent*, a purposeful rebellion against some specific aspects of a rule or norm, as in

²⁰⁰ Frank, Tom (2003), ‘The rebel Consumer’, in Tom Frank & Matt Weiland eds., *Commodify Your Dissent; Salvos from the Baffler* (London & New York: W. W Norton & Company), p 32.

²⁰¹ Frank (1997), *ibid.*, p 235.

²⁰² See Heath, Joseph & Potter, Andrew (2004), *Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Became Consumer Culture* (New York: Harper Business).

²⁰³ Heath & Potter (2004), *ibid.*, p 8.

the case of civil disobedience, and *deviance*, a form of useless tautological resistance for its own sake, as in the case of the Situationist concept of cognitive dissonance.²⁰⁴ But most importantly, the authors insist that without this distinction, and '[i]n a world of this type, countercultural rebellion is not just unhelpful, it is positively counterproductive'.²⁰⁵

Art© inc.: the inter-penetration of capitalism and its critiques

In his account of contemporary art, Jullian Stallabrass proceeds to a similar analysis and reaches a similar conclusion.²⁰⁶ To him, contemporary cultural forms, in this case art, are becoming increasingly *incorporated*, not in the sense of co-optation – one incorporates the other – but in the less hierarchical sense of blended, combined thoroughly to form a consistent whole in an ever reducing and expanding global space of interdependency. Despite the inherent opposite character of art (counterculture) and business (mass culture), the image of the 'freedom of art' is used to sell the ideal of freedom, which art must strive to reinvent and recreate perpetually:

[...A]rt must continually display the signs of its freedom and distinction from the mass by marking off its productions from those vulgarized by mass production and mass appeal [...]. So the tireless [...] quest for novelty and provocation closely reflects the arresting combinations of the elements in advertising, and the two feed off each other incessantly. As in a parade of products in mass culture, forms and signs are mixed and matched, as if every element of culture was an exchangeable token, as tradable as a dollar. Furthermore, the daring novelty of art – with its continuous breaking with conventions – is only a pale rendition of the continual evaporation of certainties produced by capital itself, which tears up all resistance to the unrestricted flow across the globe of funds, data, products, and finally the bodies of millions of migrants.²⁰⁷

He analyses the instance of the apparition of the *installation* in contemporary arts as a new form of competition with mass culture, since it confers social distinction to both producer and viewer/consumer. He also underlines a paradox there: if postmodernism, supposed to put everything on the same linear plane, challenges the category of high-modernist art through the delightful 'pollut[ing] of it with a myriad of cultural forms', this rhetoric also reinforces the globalization of the economy, to such an extent that it becomes a 'militant form of capitalism' and increases the flows material, socio-cultural and symbolic capital.²⁰⁸ As Bourdieu argued in *Distinction* and *The Rules of Art*, in conferring *distinction*, counterculture

²⁰⁴ See Zimbardo, Philip G. (2004), 'A Situationist Perspective on the Psychology of Evil: Understanding How Good People Are Transformed Into Perpetrators', in A. G. Miller ed., *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil* (New York: Guildford Press), pp 21-50.

²⁰⁵ Heath & Potter (2004), *ibid.*, p 8.

²⁰⁶ See Stallabrass, Jullian (1999), *High Art Lite: British Art in the 1990s* (London: Verso).

²⁰⁷ Stallabrass, Jullian (2004), *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: OUP), pp 5-7.

²⁰⁸ Stallabrass (2004), *ibid.*, p 79.

becomes a form of hegemonic ideology, with cultural capital – the capital of knowledge acquired and the social value of it – serving as an ‘instrument of domination’.²⁰⁹

Analysing the incorporation of art and corporate intervention in the neoliberal age, Wu reaches a similar conclusion.²¹⁰ In a meticulous study of the privatisation of public space in Britain and the UK since the 1980s, Wu charts the shifts in public policy which eased the progress of corporation into the sphere of the arts. Integrating Bourdieu’s concept of social distinction as a form of class domination, she notes that the shrinking and increasing indistinctiveness between the two spheres – public and private; cultural and corporate – has only contributed to sharpen a competitive free-market ideology, wherein the ‘companies utilise the arts [...] as another form of advertising or public-relations strategy, or [...] niche-marketing: a way of striving an *entrée* into a more sophisticated social group through identifying with their specific tastes’.²¹¹

‘Loops of recuperation’, spaces of critique: adaptability as spirit of capitalism

Arguably though, this increasing indistinctiveness is not new, and to some, it can be viewed as part and parcel of the adaptability of capitalism incorporating its own critique. Through a comparative approach between the managerial discourse in the 1960s and in the 1990s, Eve Chiapello and Luc Boltanski have endeavoured to map out the different ideological changes underlying the recent transformations of capitalism.²¹² The book’s initial aim is to lay out the principles underlying the process of adaptation of capitalism to its own critique, in order to understand its aptitude to overcome the contradictions its practices generate. This first intent of raising awareness of the capitalist mechanism inherently integrating its own critique in its progress can also stand as a means for the constructive purpose of rearming critique.

Within the three distinct ideological ages of capitalism that have been identified since the first industrial revolution, which could be matched with Berman’s typology of modernity, the authors see common features, constitutive of the process of capitalism itself.²¹³ To them, the

²⁰⁹ Bourdieu, Pierre (1984), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), p 228. See also Bourdieu, Pierre (1996), *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

²¹⁰ See Wu, Chin-Tao (2002), *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s* (London: Verso). For more detailed analysis of the commodification and transformation of contemporary artistic production in Britain, see also Stallabrass (1999), *op. cit.*

²¹¹ Wu (2002), *ibid.* p 9.

²¹² See Boltanski & Chiapello (2005), *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso).

²¹³ See Berman, Marshall (1982), *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso), pp 17-36.

spirit of capitalism progresses according to different historical contexts and with different strategies. Yet to guarantee a commitment to the capitalist process and disarm its critique, the spirit needs to always present the process of capitalism as a source of individual fulfilment and enthusiasm, ensuring a degree of security – guaranteed on an individual and/or collective basis – and common good. Thus, the spirit of capitalism develops through its different stages stemming from a dialectical logic, as a reaction to counterbalance its critique. The critique is always born from indignation, but the sources of indignation may vary. The authors argue that in the last two centuries, there have been four sources of indignation articulated around two types of critique. On the one hand, the ‘artistic critique’ (*critique artiste*) embodied mainly by the intellectual sphere, reacts to the *loss of meaning*, construing capitalism either as a ‘source of *disenchantment* and *inauthenticity* of objects, persons, emotions and, more generally of the kind of existence associated with it’. The artistic critique also perceives capitalism as a ‘source of *oppression*, inasmuch as it is opposed to the freedom, autonomy, and creativity of the human beings’ who are governed by, and subordinated to, the impersonal force of the market logic. On the other hand, the ‘social critique’ (*critique sociale*), constructed according to the more widespread and traditional lines of the Marxist theory of exploitation, opposes capitalism as either a ‘source of *poverty* and *inequalities*’ or a ‘source of *opportunism* and *egoism* which [...] proves destructive of social bonds and collective solidarity’.²¹⁴

The typology of the concepts of *social critique* and *artistic critique* may be useful to draw a clear categorical boundary between the notions of *dissent* and *deviance*, and understand the growing convergence of business culture and counterculture as a mainspring of the *new spirit of capitalism*. Unlike Tom Frank who argues that counterculture is the driving force of capitalism, hence re-establishing a sense of hierarchy in the mechanism, Boltanski and Chiapello claim that capitalism simultaneously generates, and is generated by, the self-same resistance. However just as Tom Frank unveils the economic dynamic of counterculture, *social critique* has sporadically yet consistently been revived and re-articulated. As will be shown later in our empirical account of musical resistance in postcolonial France, fragile yet consistent voices have emerged to destroy the myth of this disempowering, over-deterministic critique as being simultaneously heterogeneous, compelling and inescapable, and reinvent a Marxist critique of the postmodern cultural order. Narrowing our focus on music, we will now examine how these processes of economic

²¹⁴ Boltanski & Chiapello (2005), *ibid.*, p 37.

concentration, cultural incorporation and ideological recuperation operate on the ground in global cultural industries. The following section will give a picture of the music industry in contemporary France, a crucial battlefield for our artists.

2. Concentration and co-optation in the music industry in France

Thus the traditional narratives of music subcultures such as punk and hip hop overwhelmingly portray alternative music as a countercultural spearhead of ideological resistance.²¹⁵ And in fact, the artistic critique of commodified culture as inauthentic may account for the aspiration to autonomy observed on behalf of our bands. Autonomy is a goal set at a financial as well as ideological level. But in a commodified world, where is the space of cultural resistance on the market terrain? The emergence of record companies known as *independent labels* may be seen as an expression of this form of resistance to the oligopolistic domination of *majors*. Originally referring to the brand or trademark conditioning intellectual property of the record, in everyday language, the term *label* has been increasingly used as a metonymy for the record company itself: hence the term *label* is most often used elliptically to refer to an *independent record label*.

Technically though, a *label* can designate either:

- (i) a whole record company: usually small, typically *independent* companies; or
- (ii) one of the units of artistic production of a sub-group in a big record company: this is very common in *majors*. For instance Capitol Records, the label for the first La Rumeur album, is in fact a sub-group of EMI.²¹⁶

A brief overview of the record industry in France may be required at this stage in order to understand and appreciate the extent of co-optation within the French music industry, a mechanism most particularly operative in the selling of commodities, or record industry.²¹⁷

2.1 Oligopoly and concentration: brief overview of the record industry in France

Curien and Moreau provide a concise and updated account of the record industry in France, presenting it as an atypical structure made of vertically integrated multinationals and a myriad of independent small actors.²¹⁸ However, as a global cultural industry, the record industry in France is also a highly horizontally concentrated market, with *majors* merging or taking over smaller companies. In 1980, Jean-Pierre Vignolle already exposed this tendency of vertical integration and horizontal concentration pregnant on the French record market in the late 1970s. At the time, and until 1998, there were still six huge MNCs in France – also

²¹⁵ On punk, see Marcus, Greil (2003), *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the 20th Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press) ; on hip hop and rock, see Reynolds, Simon (2007), *Bring The Noise: 20 Years of Writing about Hip Rock and Hip Hop* (London: Faber & Faber).

²¹⁶ For a more thorough discussion of the different uses of the term, see Jouvenet (2006), *op. cit.*, pp 6-7.

²¹⁷ For an extended account of underground music in France, see Pépin (2007), *op. cit.* ; Deshayes & Grimaud (2008), *op. cit.*; Seca (2001), *op. cit.*

²¹⁸ Curien, Nicolas & Moreau, François (2006), *L'industrie du disque* (Paris: La Découverte), p 4.

called *majors*, and known as ‘the Big Six’, some of which, have since undergone mergers and takeover bids: CBS, EMI, Polygram, WEA, RCA.²¹⁹ In the contemporary French record market, the ‘Big Four’ major record companies – featuring Universal Music, Warner Music, Sony-BMG, and EMI – make more than 75% of the world’s financial turnover in this domain. In Europe and the US, the figure even goes beyond 80%. In the end, the thousands of small record producers (also called independent labels / record companies) only make 19.3% of the world’s market.²²⁰ However this figure needs to be moderated as it does not take into account the vertical integration of independent companies into the *majors*.

The record industry itself is divided into four separate processes:

- (i) **artistic production.** This refers to the artistic process of music creation, featuring the songwriters, music composers, their managers, and if separate from the former, the singers and musicians, or music performers;
- (ii) **industrial production.** This refers to the making of the record in the studio and its industrial pressing;
- (iii) **promotion process.** This involves the marketing of the product and its publishing;
- (iv) **commercialisation.** This features distribution of the product and the final sale in a shop.

In that context, since the independent record companies do not necessarily have the resources to finance the four stages of record production, some choose to only focus on the first stage or the first two stages, which is typical in the case of small self-produced production companies. Consequently, they would have a contractual agreement with *majors* for running the other processes. Independent companies assume the publishing (or promotion) stage to a variable degree, depending on their resources. Most of the times, relatively stable independent labels are producer companies, namely, they can ensure the artistic and industrial and record production, but they often lack the necessary network resources and logistics for commercialisation. They will then contract a distribution commercial agreement with the *majors*. Outstanding independent record companies which set up their own distribution network, Pias (distributing MAP), Naïve (distributing Moleque de Rua), and Wagram (distributing Keny Arkana), are the three notable exceptions to this rule.²²¹

²¹⁹ See J.P. Vignolle (1980), ‘Développement récent des systèmes nationaux et internationaux de distribution de disques ; Concentration internationale de la distribution, vitalité des productions culturelles nationales, et rôle des pouvoirs publics: le cas français’, in *Le rôle de l’Etat vis-à-vis des industries culturelles, documents de la conférence organisée à Strasbourg du 28 au 30 avril 1980* (Conseil de l’Europe & Conseil de la Coopération Culturelle), pp 161-177.

²²⁰ Curien & Moreau (2006), *ibid.*, p 23-24.

²²¹ Curien & Moreau (2006), *ibid.*, p 27.

The publishing and distribution process is all the more facilitated that there is a historical industrial relation between media and record industries. All four *majors* are part of MNCs which also run media and communication companies that are dominant on the market, as the examples of Time-Warner, Vivendi-Universal or Sony BMG recently show. Vivendi-Universal features in its branches the French TV channel Canal Plus and the French mobile company SFR. As to Sony BMG, the company is the indirect owner of the private French TV channel M6 through the RTL group, a branch of Bertelsmann, which makes for 50% of the MNC Sony BMG. While specialised music TV channels (46%) and TV advertising (24%) play a significant promotion role in the music industry, it has been proved that radios, particularly radios whose programmes are mainly focused on music broadcasts, still hold an overwhelmingly predominant impact in influencing consumer purchasing choice, accounting for 75% of the information sources of consumers in 2003.²²²

2.2 *Majors vs. independent labels? Inter-penetration and co-optation*

As a consequence, the internal rapprochements between music, advertising, and media industry within the aforementioned creative MNCs favour rationalised optimum profitability for the record companies, who promote their own products through their own channels. But it also generates particularly acute oligopolistic economic concentration of music production. As smaller and lighter structures, the marketing strategies of independent record companies mainly lie in:

- (i) *genre* specialisation: e.g., jazz, world music, or hip hop, as the historic examples of Motown and Def Jam (now both belonging to Universal Music); and/or
- (ii) innovation: an average 60% of their budget (against 20% for *majors*) is spent in searching for new talents.²²³

The inter-penetration between media and music industries means that *majors* tend to invest most of their budget into the promotion process. The Union des Producteurs de phonographes Français Indépendants (UPFI) estimates that entering the top 20 of national sales charts requires a marketing investment of 460,000-760,000 €. ²²⁴ In that respect, the economic concentration is reflected in the marketing strategies adopted by *major* companies, which usually concentrate their promotion on only a few artists. The consequence of the

²²² Edison Media Research (June 2003), quoted in Peitz, Martin & Waelbroeck, Patrick (2005), 'An Economist's Guide to Digital Music' in *CESifo Economic Studies*, vol. 51, n° 2-3, pp 359-428; p 362.

²²³ Curien & Moreau (2006), *ibid.*, p 30.

²²⁴ Curien & Moreau (2006), *ibid.*, p 40. UPFI: Union des Producteurs de phonographes Français Indépendants, French union of independent music trade.

creation of *superstardom*, a very inequitable system of income distribution for artists (composers and performers alike) emerges, characterised by an exceptionally high financial insecurity. This becomes most obvious in the distribution of copyrights and intellectual property (IP) rights. The IP rights are usually distributed to artists in France by the Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique (SACEM), the French national professional association collecting payments of the intellectual property rights of artists and distributing them to the original authors, composers and publishers. Out of the overall record production process, the artist is usually entitled to a percentage of the record price (before tax) depending on production costs, turnover, and fame of the artists. This percentage is standardised at a usual 8% of the record price, particularly applicable to least famous, or newer talents, but can go up to 20% in the case of *superstars* such as Madonna or Johnny Halliday.²²⁵

As a result, in France only 10% of music artists have access to IP rights enabling them to make a living solely by their artistic activity, particularly in the *musiques actuelles* industry. Seldom used by artists or record industries but coined by intellectuals and state cultural policies authorities around 1994, the term *musiques actuelles* was constructed around the very conservative distinction between scholarly culture and popular culture, a tradition particularly acute in France. It applies mostly to amplified music (rock, rap, reggae...), to folk (*chanson*, world music...) and to a much lesser extent, to a certain fraction of jazz. One of the most crowded and active sector, the *musiques actuelles* industry is also by far the most financially precarious space: temporary and partial work is the norm for more than half of the artists.²²⁶ In 2005, out of the 38,000 living artists registered at the SACEM, only 7% received more than 10,000 € and 72% received less than 1,000 €. ²²⁷ This figure was confirmed by Coulangeon, who estimated that only the top 5% of the total 26,000 musician performers in France have a total yearly income (featuring IP rights but also performances, and other derived forms of marketisation) of more than 30,000 €, the overwhelming majority (80%) earning less than 15,000 € p/a.²²⁸

The concentration of music industry is also reflected in a general standardisation of the products. If the market is divided into subcategories matching (more or less) certain musical styles or traditions, a high concentration of the market appears even at the level of sub-

²²⁵ For more details on calculations of *royalties* and what IP rights include, see Curien & Moreau (2006), *ibid.*, pp 7-20.

²²⁶ Curien & Moreau (2006), *ibid.*, p 11. See also, Menger, Pierre-Michel (2002), *Portrait de l'artiste en travailleur. Métamorphoses du capitalisme* (Paris: Seuil, La République des Idées).

²²⁷ Source: SACEM. Cited in Curien & Moreau (2006), *ibid.*, p 15.

²²⁸ See Coulangeon, Philippe (2004), *Les Musiciens interprètes en France* (Paris: La Documentation française).

categorisation. Amongst the eleven categories identified as target markets by the SNEP,²²⁹ while the categories ‘rap/hip-hop’, ‘world music/reggae’, ‘soul/funk-R&B’ taken together make up for less than 4% of all sales in 2005, the categories ‘compilations’ and *variétés* (*internationale* or *française*) are the typical products promoted by the *majors*, representing 80% of all sales.²³⁰ By *variétés* we mean what Guibert defines in details in his discussion of genre terminology.²³¹ He recounts the evolution of the term *variétés*, originated from the French music hall tradition of the *spectacle de variétés*, since the show provided a *variety* of performances, including singers, magicians, ventriloquists, strip-teasers, stand up comedy, etc. Yet in the contemporary context of music industry, *variétés* seems to be used in French as a term equivalent of the contemporary English use of the term *pop music* (different from the French stylistic use of the term *pop*).²³² In the end, the SNEP contends that economic concentration is almost inevitable. The lobby assesses that certain *minority styles* such as ‘hip hop’ and ‘techno/house/jungle’ are difficult to stabilise and maintain on the long-term: the latter have dropped from 3,4% (each) to 0,2% and 0,3% (respectively), between 2001 and 2005.²³³

Considering the highly concentrated dimension of the record industry, the music industry is often deciphered as a privileged *locus* of cultural co-optation through an extremely high level of horizontal concentration and vertical integration. This generates not a quasi-monopoly, but a very narrow economic oligopoly, challenging the fundamental tenets of classic economic conceptions. In the 19th century for instance, Cournot’s theory of monopolies, duopolies and oligopolies famously advocated that the optimum conditions of a ‘healthy’ market competition required not a monopoly but the implication of around seven actors of comparable weight.²³⁴ Now the music market in a neoliberal age is difficult to interpret in a conventional or traditional fashion, insofar as it strays away from those classic economic theories. In that case, it is not surprising that the co-optation argument has emerged, as a widespread narrative of big companies systematically incorporating smaller

²²⁹ SNEP: Syndicat National de l’Edition Phonographique, an interprofessional lobby defending the interests of music industries such as the 4 *majors* and 44 other companies, and affiliated to the MEDEF (Mouvement des Entreprises DE France).

²³⁰ Source: SNEP, quoted in Curien & Moreau (2006), *ibid.*, p 48.

²³¹ Guibert, G  r  me (2007), ‘Musiques actuelles et politiques publiques en France. Quelles actions pour quels effets?’ in Seca, Jean-Marie ed., *Musiques populaires et repr  sentations du politique* (Fernelmont: E.M.E), pp 56-83.

²³² For a further discussion of the difference between the Anglo-Saxon traditional understanding of popular music as a synthesis between folk and art music, and the French understanding of *populaire* music being inscribed in the scholar/popular binary opposition, see Guibert, G  r  me (2007), *ibid.*, pp 57-58.

²³³ Source: SNEP, quoted in Curien & Moreau (2006), *ibid.*, p 48.

²³⁴ See Cournot, Antoine Augustin (1960), *Researches on the Mathematical Principles of the Theory of Wealth* (London: Hafner).

productions. This deterministic myth tends to trigger absolute desperation on behalf of actors struggling to remain independent. Yet according to Curien and Moreau this argument is only true only to a certain extent. The potentially bleak, or simplistic picture of an asymmetric competition between *majors* and independent labels needs to be moderated, and the myth of co-optation played down. In fact, *major* and independent companies usually share out the different domains of the music market in a dynamic of *coopetition*, a hybrid relation merging competition and co-operation.²³⁵

Nevertheless, this dimension is still real to a relative extent. This justifies the existence of smaller record companies which build their ethos of *independence* and marketing strategies against the economic dominant model and in that sense, can contribute to a form of *economic resistance* to the domination of global cultural industries. Our bands all inscribe their practice into that logic of emancipation against financial dependency. Yet this aspiration to autonomy, seen as a form of cultural resistance, can take different forms, and implies different strategies for the artists, that can turn into paradoxical antinomies. A discussion of empirical material in the remainder of this research will try to examine the strengths and limits of the ambition to autonomy on the part of our artists.

²³⁵ Curien & Moreau (2006), *ibid.*, p 31.

3. Musical practices of empowerment

On the whole, the state of the record of industry in contemporary France illustrates quite well the tensions generated by the market on musical commodities. Having established the contradictions it infers at the heart of musical production, we can now examine the different existing strategies for cultural activists to resist economic incorporation. The following section will provide a typology of the scales of cultural resistance and its relation to political activism from a theoretical perspective. Then in lieu of conclusion summarising this theoretical exploration (Chapters I and II), we will formulate three conceptual hypotheses to put to the test of empirical analysis in the remaining chapters of this research.

3.1 *Artistic practice or political praxis ?*

'Il y a des petits espaces, il faut se faufiler !'. These words are taken from a documentary about the 2006 World Social Forum in Bamako, Mali, entitled *Un autre monde est possible*, added as a bonus DVD to Keny Arkana's album *Entre ciment et belle étoile*.²³⁶ To a whole generation of activists, cultural resistance is perceived as a breach in the wall, or to paraphrase John Holloway, a small *crack* in the pervasive ice of capitalist rule.²³⁷ In the opening chapter, introducing a compilation of texts around cultural resistance, Stephen Duncombe sketches a typology of this interstitial space, elaborating in theoretical terms on the relation between cultural resistance and political activism.

The scales of cultural resistance as a form of political action

In the final analysis, though cultural resistance is not universally acknowledged, some scholarly research admits it as a theoretical category, a field worthy of academic study. For instance, Heath and Potter cited above discard altogether the political extent, or the very possibility of cultural resistance, denouncing countercultural critique as being structurally depoliticising. They radically oppose the individualistic logic of cultural expression to the collectivist rationale of political action, interpreting countercultural critique in overly absolute and decontextualised terms.²³⁸ In his theoretical overview of cultural resistance, Stephen Duncombe provides a rather concise definition of the notion of cultural resistance, clearly articulating cultural expression to political and socio-economic structures. To him, the term *cultural resistance* shall be understood 'to describe culture that is used, *consciously*

²³⁶ See *Un autre monde est possible*, which can be viewed at:

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xx9g7_un-autre-monde-est-possible_news

²³⁷ Holloway, John (2010), *Crack Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press).

²³⁸ Heath & Potter (2004), *op. cit.*

or unconsciously, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the dominant political, economic and/or social structure'.²³⁹

Duncombe argues that there are four interpretive trends to understand the articulation of cultural resistance and political activity:

- (i) **a stepping stone.** First, cultural resistance can be viewed in dialectical terms, as necessarily preceding political activity as a form of proto-political action, a necessary *stepping stone* providing symbolic, social, and sometimes economic devices to enable political activity or activism. This view is traditionally thought to be held by the Marxist perspective.
- (ii) **a political act.** Then, from a cultural theory perspective, a more absolutist understanding of cultural resistance could argue that politics and culture may be equated and put on the same plane, insofar as they can ultimately be reduced to symbolic production of meaning, i.e. collective discourse and representations of society. In that sense, the very fact that cultural resistance enables a rewriting of cultural discourse is already *a political act in itself*. This view is more characteristic of the postmodern tradition.
- (iii) **an escape from politics.** On the contrary, the argument refuting that everything is political shall put forward an anti-collectivist analysis of culture, considering that culture belongs to the private sphere and that as a consequence, cultural resistance is not only an *escape from politics* but also detrimental to political activity. This view is most commonly held by the champions of an 'antipolitical' stance and an 'apolitical' critique.
- (iv) **non-existent.** Finally, a radical interpretation of ideology and hegemony may account for the absolutist claim that cultural resistance cannot and *does not exist*, insofar as cultural expression, however radical, is always to a certain extent the expression of a dominant symbolic power. This argument can be paralleled to the critique formulated against Bourdieu's conception of symbolic violence as being over-deterministic and ultimately disempowering.²⁴⁰

Again, if this argument may be seen as a hypostatic abstraction and overly reductive understanding of culture, all those theoretical interpretive trends need to be contextualised through case studies to determine the articulation between cultural resistance and political radical expression. To undertake this task, Duncombe provides a typology of the means of conveying the political through cultural resistance. To him, radical political expression in cultural resistance can reside in **content; form** (in particular through the medium of

²³⁹ Duncombe (2002), *op. cit.*, p 5.

²⁴⁰ See Terray (1996), *op. cit.*; see also Duncombe (2002), *ibid.*, pp 6-8.

transmission); **reception** (or interpretation); or in the very **activity of cultural production** itself, insomuch as ‘the first act of politics is simply to act’.²⁴¹ In other words, depending again on context, political meaning can be attributed to a cultural form, whether this was initially intended or not.

Finally, Duncombe provides another theoretical framework that may be a useful structural tool to assess the extent of political engagement, or what he calls the *scales of resistance*. There are three structural axes to consider: **consciousness**, **social outreach**, and **results**. The first axis of *political consciousness* determines the extent to which culture was produced to consciously serve a function of resistance for a political purpose. As Duncombe argues, cultural expression can be set anywhere on this axis, ranging from ‘culture that was not meant to be rebellious [...] turned and used for [...] political ends’ to ‘conversely, culture self-consciously fashioned with rebellion in mind [...serving...] non-rebellious purposes’.²⁴² The second axis tackled by cultural resistance, ranges from individual cultural resistance, to a form of cultural resistance which scope could reach the whole of society. Again, the question of *social outreach* brings to the fore the debates about cultural incorporation by hegemonic symbolic power (as discussed above), but also the issue of community, sub-culture, and social organisation. Finally, the last theoretical axis to assess the political aspect of cultural resistance resides in its *results*. Closely tied to intentions but contingent on material contextual circumstances, this spectrum ranges from ‘survival to revolution’, where survival is a mere tentative re-appropriation of human dignity, and revolution not only questions the dominant power, but also overthrows it.²⁴³

3.2 Hypotheses for empirical investigation

Having established conceptual premises to put our object of study into theoretical context, we can embark on our fieldwork analysis. Our empirical enquiry is based on three main hypotheses.

(i) *A dialectical mode of re-appropriation:*

relations between musical practices and political resistance to neoliberal globalisation.

Globalisation produces a radicalisation of socio-economic discrepancies at different levels in space and time, from international to local. It polarises socio-economic positions at

²⁴¹ Duncombe (2002), *ibid.*, p 7.

²⁴² Duncombe (2002), *ibid.*

²⁴³ Duncombe (2002), *ibid.* pp 7-8.

different spatial and temporal levels. The advent of neoliberal globalisation has accentuated this phenomenon, disjoining the different forms of political resistance. This has been accompanied by a displacement and fragmentation of the traditional conceptual paradigm of the working class within radical theory, to such an extent that with the postmodern approach the concept of class itself imploded. At the same time, the radicalisation of socio-economic discrepancies generated a polarisation of a less clearly identified notion of class, placing an emphasis on more acutely differential social classes and pyramidal strata of power. Incorporating different criteria or non class-specific elements, the concept of class was reconfigured within a problematic of *social exclusion*. This trend of class fragmentation and displacement has become an inescapable dimension of capitalist exploitation and imperialist domination. The multiplication of theoretical criteria (such as nationality, race, and to a lesser extent gender and sexual orientation), and more recently increasingly cultural criteria (such as ethnicity or religion), whereby specific social and cultural categories are stigmatized differentially through literal *discrimination*, further entrenches the process of *invisibilisation*, the fragmentation of solidarities, and the obscuring of the notion of class altogether.²⁴⁴

This theoretical fragmentation organises resistance into a hierarchy of legitimacy within the political discourse, thereby creating hierarchies *within* political resistance to neoliberal globalisation. The ensuing competition between these discursively privileged forms of exploitation (or *oppression*) enables the institutionalisation and incorporation of resistance. In practice, this translates into economic co-optation and cultural assimilation. Thus resistance to neoliberalism becomes increasingly equated not with the struggle for systemic change, but with reformist demands for its ameliorative adjustment, to make exploitation more humane and oppression more bearable. This logic has been contended to not only be counter-productive to generate a global alternative to neoliberalism, but ultimately to further entrench capitalist domination, hence disarming its critique.²⁴⁵

In the end, institutional political practices have assimilated this logic to such an extent that in some cases, the concept of *politics* has been rejected altogether by a significant fraction of the excluded social classes. A number of postcolonial *banlieue* youth in France feel disaffiliated from the realm of politics, or in cases even society at large. But this is also the case for a whole fraction of grassroots networks involved in developing local autonomous initiatives and creating social alternatives in their communities. Disillusioned

²⁴⁴ On capitalist restructuring in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the emergence of the paradigm of *exclusion*, and the launch of this process of *invisibilisation* of the working class, see Kouvelakis, Stathis (2007), *La France en révolte: Luttres sociales et cycles politiques* (Paris: Textuel), pp 23-54.

²⁴⁵ See Boltanski & Chiapello (2005), *op. cit.*

with political resistance, and viewing politics as corrupted, or useless at best, they may even disown the concept of *politics* altogether. In the face of the increasingly international and globalised character of exploitation, they rely instead on ‘the third actor’, civil society, or at times withdraw into their own local communities. Civil society privileged as flexible, local, and less institutionalised, is envisaged as escaping the deficiencies of corrupted *politics* and a means of creating active forms of solidarity in a sphere autonomous from the dynamic of recuperation.

As culture is a privileged vehicle to shape social identities, certain musical expressions have become a default form of resistance for those denied political representation. In the intellectual context of ‘postcolonial ruptures’ in contemporary France, where hegemonic discourses perpetrate symbolic violence against social groups denied, ignored or stigmatized, cultural practices are employed as an alternative form of political re-appropriation and gateway to symbolic empowerment.²⁴⁶ They offer a means of accessing collective social identification, outside the traditional political practices perceived as reproducing exclusion. Historically, this process was analysed by Benjamin and Brecht in the 1930s who, surveying the rise of fascism in Europe, observed that ‘the *politicisation of art* would respond to the *aesthesis of politics*’.²⁴⁷ In the era of *altermondialisme*, it could be suggested that the emerging cultural resistance becomes constituted as a ***return of the politically repressed***, a dialectical mode of political appropriation. Artistic practices – and overwhelmingly music – have become almost inseparable from the notion of political dissent, particularly for the lower classes. Those artistic practices are not exempt from the dynamic of incorporation and may, in turn, reproduce exclusion. Yet far from being mere complements to social movements, artists generate a culture of ‘speaking up’ (*prise de parole*) in public spaces.²⁴⁸ This is a crucial initial step to re-appropriate social identities, and in some cases a sense of the political collectivity.

²⁴⁶ See Bancel, Bernault, Blanchard, Boubeke, Mbembe & Vergès (2010), *op. cit.*

²⁴⁷ Brecht & Benjamin, cited in Feynerou, Laurent (2005), *Résistances et utopies sonores* (Paris: CDMC), p 11.

²⁴⁸ As Sonya Kellenberger suggests in her study of artistic practices in public spaces. See Kellenberger, Sonya (1999), *Espaces publics et formes de mobilisation politique: le rôle des pratiques artistiques*, Research thesis (Paris: Université de Paris VIII).

(ii) *Re-appropriation, autonomy, emancipation:*

the heterodoxy of artistic practices of resistance as a form of emancipatory autonomy.

The second hypothesis relates the process of appropriation to the notion of emancipatory autonomy. When deployed, cultural resistance creates a space of autonomy, notwithstanding limited or temporary, which is a symbolic locus to generate a dynamic of collective emancipation of the multitude. In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri describe the *multitude* in a collective, multi-faceted figure of resistance to the *imperium* (power) of Empire:

New figures of struggle and new subjectivities are produced in the conjecture of events, in the universal nomadism [...] They are not posed merely against the imperial system—they are not simply negative forces. They also express, nourish, and develop positively their own constituent projects. [...] This constituent aspect of the movement of the multitude, in its myriad faces, is really the positive terrain of the historical construction of Empire, [...] an antagonistic and creative positivity. The deterritorializing power of the multitude is the productive force that sustains Empire and at the same time the force that calls for and makes necessary its destruction.²⁴⁹

The heterogeneity of this *multitude*, connected to the lack of visibility mentioned in the first hypothesis, impacts not only on the geometry of the cultural networks but also the organisation of the artistic practices. In other words, the geometry of the cultural networks of resistance to neoliberalism may vary significantly in scope (local, national, global...), nature (*association*, activist movement, community collective...), and structure, determined by the internal hierarchy and mode of organisation (grassroots, semi-participatory, representative...). The artistic practices of our bands will consequently be affected by the geometry of the cultural networks they are inscribed in.

Thus there is a wide range of musical practices implying different degrees of resistance to neoliberalism, at variable levels of participation. Musical expressions in postcolonial France usually belong to a broader network of resistance. Bands will often be associated with a series of similar acts, or be inscribed in a broader dynamic of alternative expressions. This creates a sense of the existence of a cultural network of resistance, departing from a musical subculture and developing into counterculture promoting alternative counter-hegemonic discourses. The type of musical subculture can mix and vary, ranging from punk to hip hop, from *chanson* to samba, from carnival to reggae but the networks are always idiosyncratic, often anchored locally. Usually, the level of resistance and politicisation of expression will vary according to the ideological and social configuration of the cultural networks facilitating those practices and the inclusion of the bands into those broader networks. The

²⁴⁹ See Hardt, Michael & Negri, Antonio (2000) *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), p 61; See also further account in Hardt, M. & Negri A. (2004), *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press).

activities of the cultural network may be extremely diverse and flexible, and imply a plurality of socio-economic and ethno-cultural backgrounds. The ensuing cultural networks exercising politically committed artistic practices emerge from different ideological traditions: they can be rooted in several political and social legacies simultaneously, and shaped by a multiplicity of affinities to other cultural networks. Through this process of mixing (*métissage*) of historical legacies and cultural influences, there is a cultural and social reconfiguration taking place, aiming at facilitating a sense of emancipation through the appropriation of heterogeneous artistic forms, but always in an autonomous, specific process. This will affect the musical practices of our bands, shaping the intentions of the artists and the way they are interpreted by the audience.

Overall it could be suggested that in the musical practice of resistance, the *locus* of emancipation is situated at the *bridging point between the universality and the particularist aspect of the process*, forming a ***paradoxical dynamic of autonomy of appropriation and heterodoxy of practices***.

(iii) Incorporation of the resistance, a power struggle of appropriation: reception of artistic practices and visibility.

Finally, it should be noted that the geometry of the social impact of the cultural network (local, regional, international, mainstream or confidential), depends on the level of institutional or economic incorporation of the network. The level of diffusion and visibility in mainstream and independent media is an indicator of the latter impact. More generally, it could be suggested that the musical form becomes politicised, and the resistance is only complete and validated through the process of reception of artistic practice, subject to an ***interpretive struggle to impose hegemonic ideological configurations on specific aesthetic forms***.

Chapter III.

Concepts and contexts: the material conditions of cultural resistance

1. Placing cultural resistance in its political context: the hierarchy of discursive appropriation

- 1.1 The return of mass protest
- 1.2 The return of the historically repressed? The racialization of class and the postcolonial legacy
- 1.3 *Déclassement*, fragmentation and the cultural turn of resistance
- 1.4 Discursive appropriation: conceptual proposition

2. The connectivist logic of the cultural network: a topographic proposal by musical affinity

- 2.1 A flexible geometry, favouring a plurality of social and cultural connections
- 2.2 Tentative topography: musical affinity networks and the cultural connections to activist politics
- 2.3 Recap figure of the proposed topography of networks:
musical communities and cultural connections between the case studies

3. The actors and spheres of resistance: a quest for legitimacy?

- 3.1 Four types of discourses
- 3.2 The paradigm of legitimacy and the three discursive power networks
- 3.3 Confronting the actors of the three spheres to the three types of legitimacy

Following a concise exploration of the conceptual ins and outs of our object of study, we will now turn to empirical considerations, focusing on the context surrounding our bands. From the outset, an immediate connection between the music of our artists and the political context can be established. When citing their inspirations and influences, a heterogeneous mix of musical references along with different episodes in the history of social struggles in France were convened to epitomise cultural resistance. This could range, for instance: from the anarchist singer Léo Ferré (for Jolie Môme or OPA) to the *conscious rap* of Assassin (for Keny Arkana or Stéréotypes); from the Larzac experiments (Tarace Boulba) to the political mobilisations of migrant workers, usually their parents (La Rumeur, MAP, Mouss & Hakim). Reclaiming a past of social movements seems logical as it also translates a process of reflection on what shaped the present conditions of the resistance. For many of our collectives, being inscribed in a historical legacy was construed as a way to entrench and reinforce the present struggle. This historical quest ultimately stems from a search for legitimacy, stability, and visibility for the activists, so ingrained into the fabric of their daily lives that the quest becomes almost an existential question. Inscribed in a widespread and much more global process, this conception of resistance is far from restricted to postcolonial France. *Existence is resistance* is the militant catchphrase of a recently formed American cultural resistance organisation ‘determined to promote non-violent resistance through

cultural arts [...used] as a means of expression and liberation of marginalized peoples throughout the world with a focus on connecting to the situation of occupied Palestine'.²⁵⁰ This is what the project *Mouss et Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées* (MHOC) is all about. Revisiting the register of the musical production of Algerian migrant workers ranging from the 1940s to the 1970s, the brother singers Mouss and Hakim Amokrane stated clearly during interviews that their project is '*le reflet d'une parole qui a été prise depuis longtemps*'.²⁵¹ Recurrent claim close to their hearts, their chief broader purpose lied in highlighting obscured, or repressed historical sequences.

This chapter will get into the general features of musical resistance in postcolonial France, establishing investigative guidelines and topographic trends to analyse our acts. At this stage, we would have to keep in mind the risk of over-schematisation and simplification of empirical realities which are necessarily polysemic. This is all the more accurate for some of our artists who not only reclaim sequences of history as their own history, a memory denied from dominant public discourses, but also struggle against interpretive appropriation to develop 'their own side of the story'. Even then, the following pages will draw typologies, frameworks and tools to think out the empirical considered in its globality, providing an account mapped out from participant observation on the social, political and material conditions of cultural production. After locating cultural resistance within the specific social context of contemporary France, featuring a return to mass protest and renewed prominence of postcolonial identity in resistance, we shall reassess the notion of (re)-appropriation, underlying question of this research, against the background of political discourse. From then, a rapid introduction to the case studies will be initiated via a musical classification. In the end, the question of discursive appropriation will be discussed and linked to the actors and spheres of resistance.

²⁵⁰ See Existence is Resistance network: www.existenceisresistance.org/about

²⁵¹ Taken from *MHOC webreview*. See also <http://originescontrolees.blogspot.com/>

1. Placing cultural resistance in its political context: the hierarchy of discursive appropriation

A feature common to our collectives is a striking aspiration to pay tribute to the history and memory of struggles, and replace obscured or untold historical legacies at the centre of public discourse with their artistic production. Partly shaping the recent sequences of mass protest in France, those denied sequences of history constitute sediments which go to the bottom of a political hierarchy imposed to the increasingly fragmented masses of the oppressed: the more repressed the sequence, the more oppressed the community in terms of symbolic power. In other words, the more silenced, denied, and distorted the history and present condition of the fragmented masses, the more alienated and symbolically *dispossessed* the community, and the more likely is it to be at the bottom of the political hierarchy. Struggling to be audible and visible in political terms, the oppressed struggle against being politically inexistent: in a word, plainly inexistent, to paraphrase Sayad's analysis of exclusion being inherently politically motivated.²⁵² This exclusion mechanism is also bound to have consequences on the dynamic of symbolic power, insofar as symbolic resistance, namely re-appropriation in discourse, cannot take place on a neutral ground but only on a hierarchical terrain where the actors are already positioned in a pyramid, fragmented into layers of discursive appropriation.

1.1 The return of mass protest.

Marking a shift in contemporary French politics towards a polarisation and reconfiguration of forces, the 21st April 2002, a date when FN leader Jean-Marie Le Pen came second in the first round of presidential elections, is often referred to as a symbol of the inadequacy of the distinction, or increasing indistinctiveness, between Left and Right, and of the helplessness of parliamentary politics of 'moderate' mainstream parties, and their failure to address popular concerns. The frequent crises taking place in France since that date heralded the subsequent coming to the fore of a sporadic yet very profound crisis of *political legitimacy*, paving the way for a re-politicisation of culture and society. The sequence 2002-2007 in particular marked an acute return of mass protest. This phenomenon could be considered as a catalyst concentrating the shortcomings and translating the contradictions pregnant in the latest transformations of capitalism. It also calls to mind past examples of mass protest, and in that sense there is an undeniable historical continuity between the

²⁵² Sayad (2006), *op. cit.*

resistance in May '68 and the general context of social unrest in France since the 21st April 2002.

In truth that 21st April 2002 date, remembered as an unprecedented electoral setback for so-called 'Republican parties' and fatal day for democracy, can be considered the tip of the iceberg, concealing a longstanding and much deeper crisis of representative democracy. Inscribed in a much broader context of 'global transformations', the representative democracy framework started its fall into disrepute in the 1970s with the collapse of the embedded liberal system, conferring discredit on Keynesianism, and with it on the political values associated with the 'Fordist compromise'.²⁵³ As argued by Simon Clarke the Ford-derived liberalism of mass production emerged after World War II as a 'strange bedfellow' to the Keynes-inspired economic model of mixed economy, based on mass consumption and giving a prominent role to the state.²⁵⁴ Structured around the welfare state compromise, the ruling classes established their dominion at the centre, based on a national rhetoric interpreting the notion of common good economically in terms of Keynesian policies, and politically in terms of *consensus* (often called 'postwar consensus'), promoting the idea of representation as democracy.²⁵⁵ The advent of neoliberalism started in the 1970s in economic terms and solidified in the 1980s, finding justifications under the new ruling ideology articulated by Thatcher and Reagan, portending a 'traumatic divorce between Fordism and Keynesian-welfarism'.²⁵⁶ In political terms the demise of the Fordist compromise aggravated rapidly to translate economically into more volatility and flexibility. Politically, the economic instability was quick to underpin a crisis of representation and legitimacy, featuring both political polarization and increasing politicization.²⁵⁷

To return to contemporary France, the sequence of mass protest, which filled the vacuum of democratic deficit, started at national level in 2003, with a crisis of legitimacy for the

²⁵³ Kouvelakis (2007), *ibid.*, pp 107-132. On 'global transformations' of neoliberal capitalism, see Held & McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton eds. (1999), *op. cit.*, esp. Chapters 3-5 (pp. 149-282) ; Callinicos, Alex (2007), 'Globalization, Imperialism and the Capitalist World System', in Held & McGrew eds., *Globalization Theory: Approaches and Controversies* (Cambridge: Polity) ; Harvey, David (2005), *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: OUP) ; On Fordism and post-Fordism Koch, Max (2006), *Roads to Post-Fordism: Labour Markets and Social Structures in Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate).

²⁵⁴ Clarke, Simon (1990), 'What in the F---'s name is Fordism', paper for British Association Conference, University of Surrey, 04/04/1990. Retrieved at: www.warwick.ac.uk/~syrbe/pubs/Fordism.pdf

²⁵⁵ On globalization generating a crisis of representative democracy, particularly within the confines of the nation-state, see Lupel, Adam (2009), *Globalization and Popular Sovereignty: Democracy's Transnational Dilemma* (London: Routledge) ; Loughlin, John, Hendriks, Frank & Lidström, Anders (2011), 'Subnational democracy in Europe: changing backgrounds and theoretical models', in Loughlin, Hendriks & Lidström eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Local and Regional Democracy in Europe* (Oxford: OUP), pp 1-20.

²⁵⁶ Clarke (1990), *ibid.*, p 15. On 1980s France, see Cusset, François (2006), *La décennie: Le grand cauchemar des années 1980* (Paris: La Découverte).

²⁵⁷ Beck, Ulrich (2000), *The Brave New World of Work* (Cambridge: Polity).

government on the Fillon plan, imposing the reform of retirement schemes despite a spectacular series of strikes and demonstrations of up to two million people.²⁵⁸ This mobilisation, climaxing in the unitary (*unitaire*) demonstration of 13th May 2003, reached such an extent that it triggered demonstrations *in support* of the project from the ‘silent majority’ (sic), stigmatizing the strikers as ‘privileged’, crossing a further boundary in the manufacturing of popular hostility against the defenders of the welfare state. Insidiously but undoubtedly marking French society, this sequence prefigures an entrenching process of polarisation and radicalisation of struggles, with the CFDT decision to break away from solidarity and sign the negotiation being durably remembered by some (like Jolie Môme) as an irremissible act of *class betrayal*, and construed by radical Left observers as a symbol of the further stepping into a reformist distortion (*dérive*) of syndicalism. The following sequence – mobilisation around the referendum on the EU constitution in May 2005 – exposes a more global aspect of the same facet and the structural character of crisis of representative democracy and its political institutions. The ‘*Non*’ campaign generated a mobilisation of citizens for the No vote unprecedented on issues as abstract as the EU. On 29th May 2005 the EU Constitution was dismissed by the French, with 54,68% of voters rejecting the project. The elaboration of the *collectifs anti-libéraux* paved the way for a subsequent convergence of discourses of resistance to neoliberal ethos and bolstered the reconstruction of political alternatives on the Left, with the emergence of coalitions such as the NPA and the *Front de Gauche*.²⁵⁹

More broadly, this sequence of events translated a tangible polarisation of affiliations, and became identified with a wider *gauche anti-libérale*. The same logic of representative democracy in crisis informs postcolonial, societal margins with what was remembered as the ‘November 2005 riots’ as a significant benchmark of this crisis. A key agent in reproducing ideological hegemony of the ruling class, the French state discriminates between postcolonial revolt and radical left discourse, giving them differential treatment in reception and repression. In November 2005 the state took state of emergency measures to impose a curfew over the *banlieues* in revolt – a policy unseen since the colonial liberation struggle times of Algerian war in 1961. Due to a general sense of social, economic, and racialized state

²⁵⁸ My argument here is inspired from the analysis provided by Stathis Kouvelakis of this sequence. See Kouvelakis (2007), *op. cit.*, pp 227-297.

²⁵⁹ NPA: Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste. Front de Gauche: electoral coalition between the PCF and the Parti de Gauche, initially set as an abbreviation of Front de Gauche *pour changer l'Europe*, tracing its inception in the No vote campaign (italics mine). For a concise analysis of the contestation current underlying the No vote, see Kouvelakis, S. (2005). ‘France: the triumph of the political’, *International Socialism* 108, Autumn 2005, pp. 7-13.

violence much more severe, the criteria of *legitimacy* in interpretation of the revolt would probably be the most appropriate to situate this revolt within this series of crises. A sense of ‘hatred of France’, hence of the state, was predominant through the night battles against its policing, repressive apparatuses. A palpable rage exploded against a French state that would not only deny opportunities and increasingly tended to favour only the interests of a wealthy and white minority, but most of all *killed* its youth, with a blatantly racialized or postcolonial, differential treatment of its own citizens. As an almost direct consequence of this, the November 2005 events managed to seriously shake the legitimacy of representative democracy. Yet the interpretations and narrative configurations around the events also polarised public discourse around the *banlieue* youth in revolt, obscuring the blatantly disclosed problem of political legitimacy by embedding it into an *identity* question, both national and ethnic. This tendency is also reflected in the discourse of grassroots activist initiatives campaigning for equality which were emerging at the time. The provocative declarations of the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République (MIR) have since then consistently confirmed an inexorable polarisation along ethnic, and mostly postcolonial lines. For instance, prominent MIR figure Houria Bouteldja labelled the white majority as ‘*souchiens*’, deriving from the term *Français de souche* (‘root French’, the French equivalent of White British), arguably a pageant word to conceal a racialized conception of a fantasmatic French identity, but probably aimed as a pun-on-words too due to the homonymy between ‘*souchien*’ (‘root French’) and ‘*sous-chien*’ (less-than-dog/underdog).²⁶⁰ The French state displayed a level of intolerance quite disproportionate to say the least, to this rather petty, public declaration on national television. Yet another exemplary case in point of reckless, symbolic state repression, Houria Bouteldja was sued for libel.²⁶¹

Only a few months after the November 2005 revolt, with the CPE movement in the Spring of 2006 the crisis of legitimacy for the state reached an unprecedented scale and climax. The CPE movement is a moment particularly interesting to consider in terms of historical comparison with ’68. Of considerable length and scope, it was considered the biggest social movement since May ’68: huge demonstrations of up to three million people taking to the streets three times in the same week (last week of March 2006), involving actions in very small localities which had not seen social mobilisations since May 1968. The *mass* aspect of

²⁶⁰ See d’Elia, Gilles, ‘La défaite de la pensée souchienne’ giving an account of the case. Retrieved at: http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id_article=70&var_recherche=souchien

²⁶¹ At time of writing, Houria Bouteldja’s judicial prosecution for racial insult has just come to a close. After a trial in Toulouse in December 2011, the verdict was delivered on 25th January 2012 discharging the activist. See <http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/societe/20111214.FAP8991/proces-d-houria-bouteldja-pour-injure- raciale- decision-le-25-janvier.html>

the mobilisation facilitated the union of different forms of contestation. In her analysis of May '68, Kristin Ross contends that 'the principal idea of May was the union of intellectual contestation with workers' struggle'.²⁶² This argument may be compared to two distinct movements of convergence during the CPE movement:

- (i) the increasing support from trade unions and public sector workers going on strike in solidarity with the students;
- (ii) to a lesser extent, the attempt at a timid and disorganised yet real efforts towards the union of the organised, well-established and even ritualised student and trade unions movement on the one hand, and on the other, more spontaneous, autonomous, less readable or established movements (often located in the *banlieues* and peripheries, but not exclusively). Arguably this had surfaced partially at national level as genuinely autonomous, grassroots groups during the November 2005 revolt. The tactics deployed by the rioters in 2005 may have paved the way or be a source of copycat inspiration for some of the strategies used in direct action during the CPE. Similarly, the repression techniques used by the riot police during the CPE built on the November riots, though this statement should be moderated, since the *lumpen* groups active the November riots are not necessarily the same who got involved in the CPE movement. Interpreters and social commentators are still debating whether these social revolts may be considered as forms, or proto-forms of political protest, some even viewing the CPE movement as the middle class equivalent of the November 2005 riots.²⁶³

Another parallel between this sequence of events and 1968 lies in the wider process of re-appropriation, or incorporation by neoliberal discourse of the language used by the resistance to qualify social struggles. It may be argued to operate in the taxonomic shifts after '68, notably with the shift from 'politics' to 'ethics', and from 'political' militancy to 'social' activism in the late 1970s. After Chirac's second accession to power in 2002, depoliticization and deradicalizing discourse had taken on an increasingly significant power, defended by the media (and typically, mainstream media) who wholeheartedly took up a particularly proactive role in this process of essentialisation of concrete realities and evacuation of the material and radical character of social struggles. And again, one of the chief strategies revolved around the racialization of class.²⁶⁴ This trend tends to conceal the discourse on exploitation, or at least make it materially less tangible: the term *racaille* (scum) becomes

²⁶² See Ross, Kristin (2002), *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press), p 11.

²⁶³ See Lagrange & Oberti eds. (2006), *op. cit*; Muchielli & Le Goaziou eds. (2007), *op. cit*.

²⁶⁴ See Beaud & Pialoux (2003), *op. cit*.

equated with any North African, or Sub-Saharan ethnic minority coming from a socially disadvantaged background and living in suburban lower-class areas, and the abstract term *précarité* (precariousness) is generalised to all of the middle class in order to cover up the reality of destitution (*pauvreté*).²⁶⁵

To return to the CPE movement as a high point of social mobilisation during the 2002-2007 period, it could be argued on the whole that like May '68, the sequence was a prismatic event echoing on a regional (national) level an international, anti-imperialist and *altermondialiste* struggle against neoliberal globalisation. Distinguishing in her analysis of '68 three clear ideological targets of the May movement – *capitalism*, *American imperialism*, and *Gaullism* – Kristin Ross argues that the three entwined axes of protestation and the diversity of the social and political context – revolutionary or not – created a prismatic, multi-dimensional reality.²⁶⁶ Analysing the 'afterlives' or aftermath and interpretation of May '68, which tend to reduce the scope of the event, Ross insists on the *temporal reduction*, in addition to a *spatial* and *social reduction* of the May '68 movement in its succeeding representations. Similarly, the CPE movement was immediately reduced spatially, socially, and temporally. Mainstream media mainly focused on the *student* aspect of protest, and in alternative media, representation was disseminated due the plurality of available media and interpretations. But beyond this interpretive reduction, as the epitome of an economic, social, and political crisis in France, the sequence of recent social mobilisations in France (2002-2007) triggered a culture unifying the networks of resistance to reinvest the social sphere in order to oppose *neoliberalism* on the one hand and *representative democracy* on the other hand. This nebula of networks could embody politically the alternative voice of civil society, and also rise against the main ideological apparatus used by the ruling class, namely the media (especially mainstream media), to maintain its dominion.

Identified as two major ideological targets, *neoliberalism* and *representative democracy* were personified as enemies of the masses around the figures of the market and the state, both systemic features of contemporary capitalism. Since 1968 the figure of the market has taken over the more human-faced incarnation of economic exploitation in the persona of the *patron*, especially the factory bosses. Yet when compared with May '68, the increasing socio-economic discrepancies of contemporary neoliberalism produced a different effect on

²⁶⁵ See Fassin, Eric & Fassin, Didier eds. (2006), *De la question sociale à la question raciale: représenter la société française* (Paris: La Découverte). On the relationship *précarité* being exploitation in disguise, see Bihr, Alain (2007), 'La précarité gît au cœur du rapport salarial', in *Interrogations*, n°4, found at: <http://www.revue-interrogations.org/article.php?article=82>

²⁶⁶ K. Ross (2002), pp 113-137.

society and on the symbolic distribution of power. While both periods featured polarization, ideological reconfiguration for the resistance and repoliticisation, the socio-economic and political inequalities (national, ethnic, postcolonial) in 2006 soared to such an extent that it generated more ‘intermediate layers’ of power either opposed or subservient to the ruling class. In ’68, the notion class conflict structured the interpretation of the struggle, triggering a dual understanding of power appropriation between the elites of capital and the masses behind labour. In 2006 the fragmentation of marginalized groups, along with the ethnicization of class made it difficult to maintain such a clear-cut sense of ‘us vs. them’ outside the immediate confines of the site of struggle itself. In other words, with more concentration of capital in fewer hands comes a differential form of class domination, producing class fragmentation. This means that outside specific moments of struggle such as the CPE or the November 2005 riots, different sections of the proletariat, not exclusively but in particular migrant, *banlieue* and postcolonial minorities are *partially or totally* (i.e., differentially) excluded from a lot if not most of the available political spaces, or have less consciousness of those spaces. This activates a process of exclusion much more all-encompassing than exploitation insofar as it divides and alienates the workforce before they even access the process of labour, in their very identity. If we conceive of symbolic, and ultimately political power as a hierarchical pyramid, soaring inequalities and exclusion produce ‘intermediate layers’ of social units neither at the top nor at the bottom. Those intermediate layers act as ‘buffer zones’ against the bottom layers, preventing direct access to the top layer, following the centuries old ‘divide and rule’ imperial logic. This increasing symbolic and political hierarchy returns structurally as a systemic tool of neoliberalism in contemporary France. Fostering class fragmentation, it generates less social visibility of the global resistance on the *République*’s space – to the extent that some social groups are effectively *denied* access to that social space. Thus the category of *social exclusion* emerges as a framework to analyse this process of hierarchical relegation – with the dead end feeling of being always already incorporated (*récupéré*) gradually soaring in the resistance.

1.2 Déclassement, fragmentation, and the cultural turn of resistance.

The pyramidal hierarchy of neoliberal symbolic domination in public political discourse sketched above tries to materialise the processes of increasing social relegation and ensuing political exclusion taking place. As mentioned, an expansive economic relegation phenomenon can be noted, very often reconfigured along ethnic lines and resulting in specific forms of oppression. Applied to contemporary France, this creates a growing divide between a

former industrial white working class, partially incorporated today in the lower middle class as basic employees of the service sector, and an often non-white, or of migrant origin, lower class (grassroots *banlieue* groups), although a significant section of the former industrial white working class is also undergoing the destabilisation and flexibilisation of labour, with long periods of unemployment and underemployment.²⁶⁷ This phenomenon of *déclassement* is often interpreted in racist terms and favours the rise of the Front National in significant parts of former industrial areas, now hardly stricken industrial wastelands, where the racially constructed figure of the *immigré* becomes the scapegoat to blame for the restructuration of capitalism. This phenomenon for instance is particularly acute in the East and North of France following the demise of the mining industry. Saïd from MAP highlighted in interview that in the working class neighbourhoods of Roubaix and its surroundings, the Front National would easily and frequently garner 30% of the votes.²⁶⁸ Ultimately, this also discredits and delegitimizes the interpretive tool of *class*, and the category of *working class* altogether rendered irrelevant to account not only for specific forms of oppression (such as postcolonial domination), but also for contemporary understanding of exploitation. There is indeed an increasing gap between the validity of the concept of *working class* as such understood in Marxian terms being still highly relevant to interpret capitalist exploitation, and the concrete implications it refers to. Typically, this means that the rise of structural unemployment, the casualisation of labour power and fragmentation of the labour force may imply a much weaker identification with the term *working class* which becomes a much more abstract or ‘ideological’ concept.

In terms of resistance, this weakening and reconfiguration of class identity is again reflected in the fragmentation of the radical opposition forces. In other words, as fragmentation generates a form of exclusion of specific groups – particularly along the lines of national and racial identity, different sub-struggles are articulated around specific campaigns or activist groups focused on a single issue, to have more impact. Bringing culture and identity at the heart of activism, those renewed forms of resistance became particularly visible after the advent of *altermondialisme*, with the December 1995 movement playing a fundamental role in the redistribution of interpretive frameworks of radical forms of resistance after the fall of the Soviet block.²⁶⁹ But this fragmentation goes also hand in hand with a racialization and ‘culturalization’ of the understanding of class, now primarily

²⁶⁷ See Lagrange & Oberti (2006), *op.cit.* ; Muchielli & Le Goaziou (2007), *op. cit.*, and more generally Beaud & Pialoux (2003), *op. cit.*

²⁶⁸ Interview with Saïdou Dias, Lille, 7th November 2007. See Appendix 6.

²⁶⁹ See Kouvelakis (2007), *op. cit.* ; Agrikoliansky, Fillieule & Mayer eds. (2005), *op. cit.*

experienced in terms of identity – and in the case of our acts, more often than not postcolonial, or ‘*banlieue*’, ‘*quartier*’ identity. Quite logically then in terms of public discourse, there has been a rising wave of struggles for the appropriation of historical legacies. This has been exemplified again by the recent upsurge in *luttres mémorielles* over the experience of colonialism. The Taubira Law voted in 2001, legally condemning slavery as a crime against humanity was probably the most famous instance of this trend. In those struggles over the re-appropriation of denied history (or symbolic struggle of discursive appropriation, to reformulate it in Bourdieusian terms), the notions of *oppression* and *domination* are summoned to qualify a specific experience. The experience itself requires a particularist approach in its interpretation and cannot be seen solely as yet another form of capitalist exploitation, lest abandoning the readability and recognition of the idiosyncratic character of this exercise of power. In that respect, the development of differential forms of *specific oppression*, setting a competitive context for the *class* interpretive framework, is accompanied by two ominous co-determinants: on the one hand, the dismantlement of the Fordist compromise (as discussed above); on the other hand, the systematic repression – literal, police repression, along with administrative, financial, discursive, and symbolic repression – of all political expressions emerging from this so-called ‘excluded’ layer. The process of *invisibilisation* of migrant workers struggles in history and memory strikingly can illustrate this point.²⁷⁰

Not operating systematically, this process could nonetheless quite logically (yet partially) account for a cultural *withdrawal* (or *transfer*, more simply), particularly in areas of *exclusion*, for grassroots social communities not represented, or denied access to political institutions. Culture is in that case used as a privileged, primary form to express discontents and assert denied collective identities, and may hence be prone to contain repressed, political elements transformed into cultural expressions – though the contents tend to be characteristically hybrid. Our artists, a selection of ten bands or collectives actively embedded in that process, reflect this complex dialectic of political, social and symbolic reconfigurations taking place within a heterogeneous set of initiatives of re-appropriation, which ultimately merge in a consistent and discrete nebula of cultural resistance in postcolonial France.

²⁷⁰ See Boubeker, Ahmed, & Hajjat Abdellali eds (2008), *Histoire politique des immigrations (post)coloniales. France, 1920-2008* (Paris: Editions Amsterdam), esp.: Vigna, Xavier, ‘Une émancipation des invisibles? Les ouvriers immigrés dans les grèves de mai-juin 1968’, pp 85-94 ; Bouamama, Saïd, ‘Extrême gauche et luttes de l’immigration postcoloniale’, pp 237-248, esp. pp 247-248; Hajjat, Abdellali, ‘Révolte des quartiers populaires, crise du militantisme et postcolonialisme’, pp 249-264.

1.3 The return of the historically repressed?

The racialization of class and the postcolonial legacy.

Thus to re-centre our discussion on cultural resistance, if the legacy of May '68 seems quite pregnant in our case studies, particularly in theatre (Jolie Môme), other historical legacies also emerged as equally, or at times more appropriate for our collectives. Following the increasing racialization of class in dominant interpretive discourse, dividing the working and lower middle class in France along ethnic lines, the postcolonial element and the references to colonial and postcolonial history have increasingly surfaced as historical legacies to be reclaimed. Grassroots communities, overwhelmingly of ethnic minority or migrant background, have been relegated further down on the social scale and stigmatized to the extent that some categories were argued to not even belong to the Republic. During the November 2005 riots, the authoritarian right-wing nationalist politician Philippe de Villiers qualified the *cités* as '*territoires perdus de la République*'.²⁷¹ Equally, amongst our acts a majority considered that colonial history is at best denied, a repressive process actively excluding the postcolonial condition from dominant, legitimate discourse.

In that respect the recognition of (post)colonial history stands out as an essential stake for a majority of our artists, constituted as a quest for *postcolonial legitimacy*. In their artistic production as well as in peripheral discourse surrounding their practice, the collectives tend to either focus on the present consequences of colonialism, relating the postcolonial condition (especially MAP, Stéréotypes, La Rumeur), or in some cases, returning to the root causes by revisiting colonial history (e.g., Voukoum, Mouss & Hakim, Stéréotypes, La Rumeur). For instance, a few of La Rumeur's songs actively reclaim the repressed and dark side of history: 'Champs de canne à Paname' and '365 cicatrices' vividly trace a painful continuity between the present condition of the *banlieue* youth of Caribbean descent and their past as slaves, while 'Premier matin de Novembre' is a homage to the Algerian uprising on the 1st November 1954 and the struggle for colonial (national) liberation.²⁷² The idea of a *refusal to submit* is a common theme found in many artistic productions, as is the case in the insistent allusions to the uprising of slaves against their masters in Voukoum's songs. But this idea of resistance can also take different shapes. Mouss & Hakim seek to re-appropriate in their songs the political legacy of North African workers' living conditions and struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, on very specific issues. For instance, the song 'La carte de résidence', an adaptation of

²⁷¹ See 'de Villiers lance sa campagne présidentielle sur les traces de Le Pen', Bladi news, Sept. 2005, found at: <http://www.bladi.net/forum/49415-villiers-lance-campagne-presidentielle-traces-pen/>

²⁷² See La Rumeur 'Champs de canne à Paname', *Le bavar et la paria* EP, 1999; '365 cicatrices', 'Premier matin de Novembre', *L'ombre sur la mesure* LP, 2002.

a 1965 song by the Kabyle factory worker and fabulist musician Slimane Azem summarizes the struggle of migrant workers to be granted residency permits.²⁷³ When it started as Zebda, the musical community around Mouss & Hakim was inscribed in a consistent concern for recognition, denunciation of systemic institutionalised racism, collective denial and the unequal treatment of postcolonial minorities taking place in the present. But with the *Origines Contrôlées* project, the artists used the mediation of history to show all the depth of the present demands and articulate an unprecedented tribute to the struggles of their parents – the generation of the *immigré* as Sayad notes. Introducing the musical project, Mouss insists that it is a question of dignity:

Ces textes évoquent, sur le mode de l'humour et de la poésie, une certaine souffrance dans le quotidien de ces populations. On découvre que nos parents étaient invisibles mais pas soumis. Ces chansons, c'était déjà une façon de prendre la parole. Elles leur permettaient même de rire de leurs patrons ou du racisme.²⁷⁴

While most of our artists acknowledge the predicament of the descendants of slaves, colonized and migrants – the postcolonial generation, the political struggles of those descendants are celebrated to a much less explicit degree. Hence, Zebda immortalises the militant generation emerging out of the *Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme* (later remembered as *Marche des Beurs*) in the 1980s. The song 'J'y suis, j'y reste' may be seen as a direct reference to the 1986 campaign for migrant workers against the Pasqua laws, restricting access to the 10 year residence permits and facilitating the deportations of undocumented migrants (not yet called *sans papiers* at this stage).²⁷⁵ In the 1990s some the songs of La Rumeur take over the role of capturing the denied present and writing the collective history of the untold struggles led by the postcolonial generation. On the track 'Ils nous aiment comme le feu', Dammarys-Lès Lys is mentioned, alluding to the death of Abdelkader Bouziane, yet another case police killings of young male living in the *quartiers*, overwhelmingly of North African and Subsaharan African descent. Following the spontaneous mobilisation around the death of the 16 year-old in December 1997 the association Bouge Qui Bouge is set up and develops later informal links with the hip hop collective.²⁷⁶ Overall, the consistent references to the legacy of slavery and French colonization (particularly influential for La Rumeur, MAP, Stéréotypes and Voukoum) may be considered as a form of *return of the historically repressed*.

²⁷³ Mouss & Hakim, 'La carte de résidence', *Mouss et Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées* LP, 2007.

²⁷⁴ In *MHOC webreview*. See also *Origines Contrôlées, la revue*, #3, Autumn 2007.

²⁷⁵ Zebda, 'J'y suis, j'y reste', *Utopie d'Occase* LP, 2002. See also Abdallah, Mogniss H. & Réseau No Pasaran (2000), *J'y suis, j'y reste! Les luttes de l'immigration en France depuis les années soixante* (Paris: Réflex); and *Remue-mémoires: petite chronologie des luttes de l'immigration postcoloniale* (Paris: FSQP 2007).

²⁷⁶ See 'Ils nous aiment comme le feu' (*Regain de Tension* LP, 2004). See also *Remue-mémoires (op. cit)*.

1.4 Discursive appropriation: conceptual proposition.

In fact, this dialectical movement of relegation and repression on the one hand, and the return of the historically repressed under a cultural form on the other, may also be put in a political context, and conceptualised in more theoretical terms as a hierarchical process of discursive oppression and appropriation which can be summarised in these terms:

The following conceptual model was elaborated on the observations on the post-Fordist evolution of capitalism mentioned above,²⁷⁷ and derived from the theory of *loops of recuperation*, implying that capitalism always manages to maintain and renew its ideology via incorporation: incorporating its own resistance, it produces a redistribution or renewed form of resistance to the new spirit of capitalism produced.²⁷⁸ In the proposed model the dominant discourse is a ‘monster of incorporation’: embodied by the neoliberal ethos, it dominates thanks to its capacity to *assimilate*, or incorporate its own opposition discourse. It manages to do so not so much through a bilateral dialectic of subsuming an opposite than through a multipolar process of structural assimilation, via a differential segmenting of the process of incorporation. Put more simply and to extend the monster metaphor, neoliberal, dominant discourse at the top of the pyramid is a hungry monster of incorporation which divides to rule and rules by assimilating its enemies. In other words, neoliberalism founds its domination on a form of differential incorporation, establishing hierarchies, hence dividing the opposition discourse into layers of oppositional discourse, by legitimising politically only certain parts of the resistance and not recognising others. Mediating the dialectical conflict between two absolute poles of discursive opposition (dominant/dominated, oppression/oppressed), the intermediate discursive layers could be argued to not only disarm critique (or resistance), but to also entrench the fragmentation of the resistance to dominant discourse. Yet in truth, the emergence of those intermediary, opposition discourses creates on the whole a pyramidal system of oppression which ultimately generates competition between the layers of resistance, and consolidates both social and political exclusion. In that respect, as argued above the re-surfacing of the paradigm of *exclusion* as a discriminating factor competing with that of *class* has become an essential element in the evolution of the capitalist ideology of exploitation and domination, to the extent that Stathis Kouvelakis qualifies the process of exclusion as a form of ‘repression of class divisions’ (*‘refoulement du clivage de classe’*).²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ See Harvey (2005), *op. cit.* ; Kouvelakis (2007), *op. cit.*, chap 1-4; Cusset (2006), *op. cit.*

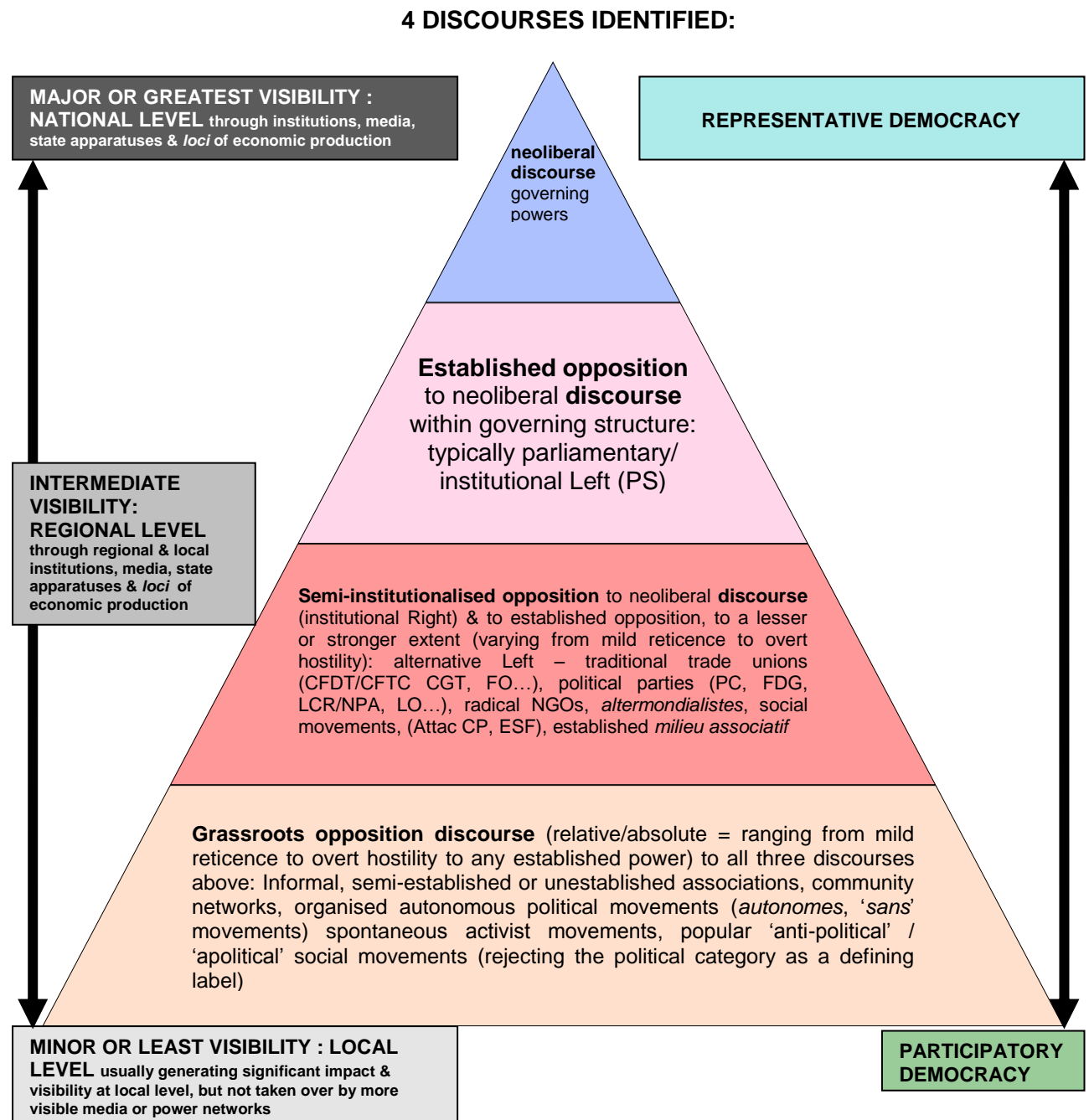
²⁷⁸ See Boltanski & Chiapello (1999), *op. cit.*

²⁷⁹ Kouvelakis (2007), in *op. cit.*, p 45.

The following figure (*Fig. 1*) may summarise in very schematic terms the logic of discursive assimilation of the resistance to neoliberal discourse generally observed during the empirical enquiry, according to two parameters: their level of visibility and their degree of representation or participation within the power structures. The pyramidal form has been chosen insofar as it implies overall general hierarchical tendencies, of concentration of a more powerful dominant discourse at the top in the hands of a few, and a more diluted and multidimensional discourse at the bottom generally spread out throughout grassroots communities and the layers of society most severely confronted to domination and oppression.

Figure 1. Hierarchy of re-appropriation in discourse

*Topography of the logic of assimilation of resistance to neoliberalism, according to level of visibility and degree of representation or participation in power structures;
Model based on empirical observation of social struggles (France, 2006-2007).*



Drawing on a wide range of theoretical and empirical elements, this pyramid undertakes to schematize the differential mechanism of incorporation at stake, a key process for the cultural resistance we are introducing here. It could also be observed that if pitted against the situation of the resistance to capitalism in the 1960s, and in May '68 in particular, it seems that since the emergence of the neoliberal consensus in the 1970s and early 1980s, intermediate layers have emerged more distinctively in the pyramid as historical palimpsests, or 'remnants' of opposition insofar as they are generally signs of different moments in the history of resistance, which tends to be increasingly recent, and less stabilised, or established in dominant history as the layer gets least visible. Those intermediate layers simultaneously serve as 'buffer zones' to protect and stabilise neoliberal discourse, but also alienate the bottom layer (the 'grassroots opposition discourse') even further from the top. This emergence of more distinctive intermediate layers may be credited to the shifts in the resistance as well. Structural unemployment, the reorganisation of capitalist exploitation, and the perpetuation or consequences of colonialism on the French metropolis long after the independence struggles may partially account for a widening gap between a radical 'old Left' and postcolonial or more autonomous grassroots. Also, the working class has become more difficult to identify insofar as the most exploited and/or oppressed do not necessarily identify with the traditional understanding of the working class.

This conceptual model drawn from empirical observation may also concur with Wallerstein's analysis of the shifts in hegemonic powers,²⁸⁰ and of the emerging social movements in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s as a questioning of 'the Old Left' and 'lingering search [...] for a better kind of antisystemic movement'.²⁸¹ This is not to say that there are no bridges between the different pyramidal layers, but in empirical observation, the general latter tendencies were noticed and are formulated here in schematic terms. Therefore, while the discourses held by all case studies selected stand in opposition to neoliberal discourse, and are generally located within the field of the grassroots opposition, some groups also have pluralistic dimensions, and try to resort to musical practice to bridge the gap between those different discourses of opposition.

²⁸⁰ See Wallerstein, Immanuel (2004a), *World-System Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), esp. pp 42-59.

²⁸¹ See Wallerstein Immanuel (2004b), 'New Revolts Against the System', in Tom Mertes, ed., *A Movement of Movements; Is Another World Really Possible?* (London: Verso), pp 262-273. This discussion of the shifts in the resistance to capitalism is quite clearly spelt out by Wallerstein in a book he wrote with Giovanni Arrighi and Terence Hopkins now considered a cornerstone in the analysis of global social movements. See Arrighi, Giovanni, Hopkins, Terence K., & Wallerstein, Immanuel (1989), *Antisystemic Movements* (London: Verso).

2. The connectivist logic of the cultural network: a topographic proposal by musical affinity.

Our analysis shall now take a detour, or step back from the discussion on history and context to introduce more substantially the artists themselves. If for the sake of general coherence in the study, the choice of case studies was narrowed down to groups who have a performing art practice – in the case of this study, popular music – as their core project, the heterogeneity of the empirical realities approached remains an interpretative stake. Yet the *prima facie*, striking feature common to all case studies resides in their mode of organisation, always structured around the logic of the network, an adaptable form favouring social reconfigurations and weaving the loose social fabric of cultural resistance.

2.1 A flexible geometry, favouring a plurality of social and cultural connections

In fact, the organisational geometry of the case studies may vary in the nature of the group (*association*, informal collective), in structure (numbers of members; horizontal or vertical degree of internal organisation), and in the way they exercise their artistic practice, including participants to more or less significant extent. This may also help to analyse the nature or degree of resistance. The diversity of the activities the case studies engage in shapes the nature of their commitment, affecting the geometry of the network and its affinities with other political networks by inscribing the artistic collectives in different types of social spheres, approached very differently from one instance to another.

But the case studies may also invest the same cultural activity very differently. The participation in workshops could be a good illustration of this. With the help of the *association* Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue (GDLAR) for example, Moleque de Rua²⁸² along with Voukoum to a lesser extent, place at the core of their activities the organisation of interactive participatory workshops (*ateliers-résidence*) of musical instrument building from recycled material, featuring spending a few days (three days to a week generally) in a community, generally socially, or at least *culturally* disadvantaged. While Moleque seems intrinsically embedded in the dynamic of socio-cultural animation (SCA), central to its action, other collectives have developed another approach to cultural resistance.²⁸³ For instance, if La Rumeur has also participated to writing workshops in the *quartiers* generally through the MJC

²⁸² who self-define themselves as more inscribed within the *mouvance altermondialiste* of global social movements.

²⁸³ SCA: Socio-Cultural Animation, although a lot of the activist practitioners involved tend to want to redefine in the more empowering terms of Socio-Cultural Action. For more about the animation vs. action debate, see *Agora débats/jeunesse* (2005). *L'animation et ses analogies: des enjeux pour l'action collective*. *Agora*, 39, 1^{er} trimestre 2005.

platforms, and were involved in this process in the recent past, the workshops are only a minor facet of the activities of the band, more active in political militancy and public discourse than in this type of social practices.²⁸⁴ The band integrated in their communities via local associative life, taking part in the artistic residences organised by the *conseil général* in the Yvelines *department*, where they live, in 2004-2005.²⁸⁵

2.2 Tentative topography:

Musical affinity networks and the cultural connections to activist politics.

The artistic collectives approached during our empirical investigation could be generally inscribed in an innumerable multiplicity of initiatives that have in common musical practice and an activist concern. Through their musical practice, the collectives approached will often meet each other as they go along with their different projects. These encounters connect the initiatives together in a cultural activist network, wherein the audience or participants get a sense of belonging to a cultural *community*. Live performances, festivals, and cultural events are privileged platforms for activating those connections, which can therefore be read as remaining anchored at grassroots level and relatively unmediated.

As far as the case studies are concerned, three broad cultural networks can be identified, defined according to the type of musical practice or artistic tradition they are inscribed in, each carrying trends or customary forms of engagement with activism or cultural practice. Within each of those three affinity networks, the artists know about each other, and more often than not, have often worked together, or played on the same stages. Roughly classified according to the artistic tradition the practice is inscribed in, three cultural networks of musical affinity were identified: the ‘popular theatre affinity’; the ‘world music affinity’; and the ‘*musiques amplifiées* affinity’.

(i) the ‘popular theatre’ affinity:

Groups where music is practiced within the context of the popular theatre tradition

Amongst our artists, the company Jolie Môme is a bit of an outsider and stands somewhat alone in this category, a bit isolated or exceptional if considered from the standpoint of musical practice. If the tradition of popular theatre has long been connected to political

²⁸⁴ As mentioned above in Introduction, *quartiers* is short for ‘*quartiers populaires*’, deemed less discriminatory than the stigma which has become attached to the term *banlieues*. Also deemed to be appropriated and stigmatized like any other term, it is the most recent expression to refer to suburban lower class areas. MJC: Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture, equivalent of community centres.

²⁸⁵ See http://www.yvelines2.yvelines.fr/communiques/frequence_78_01-10_04.html

dissent, and over the course of 20th century French history, a favourite form of expression of both communist and anarchist ideas, it has also historically entertained close relations with the PCF. A good illustration of this can be seen in the creation of all the ‘popular theatres’ (*théâtres populaires*) in France emerging alongside the Fordist compromise of the industrial era, and more acutely during the postwar period, favoured by the implementation of the welfare state. From the inception of the *Théâtre National Populaire* by Jean Vilar in 1945 to the construction of local, ‘popular theatres’ in the communist suburbs neighbouring the Paris border (*petite couronne*) in the 1960s and 1970s,²⁸⁶ a wave of cultural policy aiming at decentralising and making culture popular was particularly facilitated by local administrations run by the PCF. In addition to this Vilarian conception of popular theatre, the 1970s also see an explosion of street arts, featuring elements of street theatre, busking, and visual arts, and primarily conceived as militant experiments to festively reclaim the street as a public space (*réanimer la rue*).²⁸⁷

Emerging out of this cultural history of customary rapprochement between popular culture and revolutionary political parties, Jolie Môme tends then logically enough to be inscribed in, or rather, associated with, a tradition of political activism situated on the far Left. Its artistic productions tend to be informed, or at times structured, by revolutionary ideology, most visibly in line with the traditions of the *extrême gauche* instituted parties, although the company has developed a resolutely non-sectarian militant ethos, actively supporting less traditional forms of activism, such as minority group causes, *Sans* movements, or single issue militant organisations. Jolie Môme has duly inherited this double cultural tradition of street arts and popular theatre, and attempts to reinvent it in its theatrical as well as musical practice. The popular culture traditions of mime, street theatre, and busking, all inform and infuse the works of the company. It should be noted here that MAP also reclaims this tradition to an extent, incorporating a theatrical approach to live performance. Both collectives use costumes and embody characters when performing their songs in public, though Jolie Môme does it systematically, as part of its primary identity as a theatre company. While Jolie Môme sings their revolutionary repertoire dressed in the usual black and red outfits, impersonating

²⁸⁶ As for instance, the Théâtre Gérard Philippe in Saint-Denis, set up in 1960, under the supervision of the PCF mayor Auguste Gillot; the Théâtre de la Commune in Aubervilliers, founded in 1960 by Gabriel Garran and Jack Ralite, then *Humanité* journalist, later to become a PCF deputy; La Cartoucherie in Vincennes, initiated by Ariane Mnouchkine in 1970; or the Théâtre 71 in Malakoff, founded in 1971, under the supervision of the PCF administration of Léo Figuères. See Neveux, Olivier (2007), *Théâtres en lutte. Le théâtre militant en France des années 1960 à aujourd'hui* (Paris: La Découverte).

²⁸⁷ See de Caunes, Aude (2008), ‘Mai 68, théâtre et arts de rue: pratiques de l’intervention culturelle en espace public’, in Artous A., Epszajn D., Silberstein P. ed., *La France des années 1968* (Paris: Syllepse), pp 775-779.

insolent, *gavroche*-like, characters of revolt, on certain specific songs, MAP will also resort to several costumes occasionally, usually with a purpose of humorous exaggeration, and at times a visual form of denunciation: wearing the blue white and red mayor sash when performing the song ‘Des youyous dans ma mairie’ to emphasise institutional racism, or the factory worker blue overalls on ‘Lillo’ to reclaim their working class heritage.²⁸⁸ The two collectives also know each other, as MAP has performed in 2008 at the third edition of *La Belle Rouge*, a festival of resistance organised by Jolie Môme every summer since 2006 in their Auvergnat stronghold of Saint-Amand-Roche-Savine.

(ii) the ‘world music’ affinity:

Groups featuring a musical practice predominantly rooted in world music.

The following category refers to collectives who not only tend to chiefly establish their musical practice in world music, but also to groups generally characterised by large and flexible musical formations in terms of numbers, featuring often more than 10 musicians on stage, and at times up to 80.²⁸⁹ This number endows the musical formation with a sense of flexibility, and on the whole, tends to highlight the idea of *practising* (rather than verbally asserting) *a collective identity*. Amid our bands, three groups match that categorisation: Voukoum (VK), Moleque de Rua (MR), and Tarace Boulba (TB), all characterised by this *collectivist* conception of music. The three collectives could also be argued to belong to the same cultural affinity network as they have worked together or know about each other: Tarace Boulba played at the *New Morning* (in Paris) with Moleque de Rua, and both Moleque de Rua and Voukoum operate in France via the association Les Gamins de l’Art-Rue, responsible for booking series of residency workshops and live dates and organising their tours. They all play in similar cultural platforms or participate to similar festivals: for instance, after a series of residency workshops in the Angoulême region, Moleque de Rua participated to the festival *Musiques Métisses* in 2005; Voukoum did the same for the 2006 edition.

The three music collectives also inscribe the idea of *mobility* in their practice, exercised generally directly in the street, which becomes, like for Jolie Môme, a public space to reclaim. They also have in common to have all developed the idea of resorting to specific musical

²⁸⁸ See Axiom’s song feat. MAP ‘Des youyous dans ma mairie’, available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kjgbt_0Ex90

For ‘Lillo’, see for instance MAP in working class costumes, during their live performance at the festival *Les Francopholies de la Rochelle* in July 2007 available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxFNAMbD_Yg

²⁸⁹ Such as, Tarace Boulba playing with Malian musicians in Paris during the *Africa Boulba* project in 2003, or Voukoum, parading in the streets of Basse-Terre during the *déboulé* (carnival) of the *jours gras*.

instruments, all for different reasons.²⁹⁰ Electric musical instrument devised in 1969 by Emmett Chapman at the beginnings of the jazz-funk era (early 1970s), the Chapman Stick is used by Tarace Boulba to secure a very specific, original funk sound. Designed for the Free Hands tapping method (played not by strumming or plucking the chords but by striking the strings against the fingerboard), the Stick looks like a fretboard version of an electric bass guitar, usually with 10 or 12 strings (in the case of Tarace Boulba, 10 strings), with a range of pitch much broader than on both bass and guitar on the same instrument, and enabling the musician to use a technique similar to piano, covering both bass and melody notes together with both hands.²⁹¹ If the choice of the Chapman Stick (for Tarace Boulba) emphasizes the importance of returning to the origins of the funk legacy, the cases of Voukoum and Moleque de Rua emerge from different concerns. Both collectives are concerned with re-appropriating their cultural heritage in the light of their present, hence propose to make their own musical instruments, in order to reclaim the roots of a specific tradition, an initiative often pregnant in the musical forms classified as ‘world music’. The idea is not only to return to the roots and reinvent a musical tradition by covering all the aspects of musical practice, from music instruments making to music playing, but it also stems from a lack of material resources.²⁹²

Finally, the three collectives also have a common tendency to structure their collectivist musical practice around associative networks, and ensuing socio-cultural animation (SCA) activities. Because of the collective form of organisation, all three have in common to generate a form of socialisation in the very practice of their artistic activity. The creation of ‘social bonds’ (*lien social*) and the connectivist *network* mode of operating are therefore inherent to the organisation of the group. All three collectives are musical formations inscribed into much broader social networks, anchored locally in their community, and have set up their own registered associations in order to stabilise their activities in the community on the long-term. Run mostly by volunteers,²⁹³ the associations often garner wide support

²⁹⁰ Of course, this is also true of other collectives, particularly of Mouss & Hakim, requiring specific Arabic instruments such as chalice drums (*darbuka*), *ney* (traditional Persian and Arabic end-blown flute), or the mandora (Arabo-Andalusian lute used in Algerian and North African *châabi*). However on many other respects Mouss & Hakim are more inscribed in affinity with the ‘amplified music’ network.

²⁹¹ See the *Encyclopedia of Popular Music* (2006), 4th edn, edited by Colin Larkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press). More details also available at: <http://www.stick.com/instruments/stick/>

²⁹² See Appendix 2 for description of *mas* and details of instruments created.

²⁹³ Although technically this is only true of Voukoum: Rasta Baboul (for Tarace Boulba) has one full-time staff for co-ordinating activities, and if the Brazilian-based association Friends of Moleque de Rua is run by volunteers, the *band* Moleque de Rua is co-ordinated *via* the association Les Gamins de L’Art Rue, who have the equivalent of three full-time staff.

locally: Rasta Baboul²⁹⁴ has about 800 members mainly based in Montreuil (with the unique concept of a single subscription granting life membership to subscribers), Voukoum²⁹⁵ around 400 members mostly living in the area of *Badibou* (Bas-du-Bourg) in Basse-Terre, and the Friends of Moleque de Rua²⁹⁶ around 300 members in the *barrio* of Vila Santa Catarina, in São Paulo. The size of the association and the establishment of a fluctuant social dynamic hence favours – and in the case of Voukoum and Tarace Boulba, explicitly aims at – conflating the roles of participant (or member of the association) and organiser (or artistic performer).

Following from this, a pattern of relation to political activism can be observed for all three case studies. Because of the size and nature of organisation, the *artistic activity* is prone to become a *form of local activist practice in itself*. Therefore, the three collectives are associated with the *social*, associative tradition of locally generating (or restoring) social bonds within a community. As shall be developed below, the political aspect of this form of cultural resistance is hence more implied than explicit, and although the artistic practice of the collectives may accompany, emerge out of, or even trigger explicit forms of political commitment, it is not seen as the priority for the artistic practice. Not only is the relation to political activist groups not automatic, but in some cases, it may be rather equivocal.

(iii) the '*musiques amplifiées*' affinity:

Groups featuring a musical practice predominantly rooted in the so-called 'musiques amplifiées' (including rock, reggae, funk, hip hop...).

The following proposed category refers to collectives who tend to ground their musical practice predominantly in the so-called *musiques amplifiées* type of music. Two preliminary remarks should be made here. First, the term '*musiques amplifiées*' belongs to an institutional register. It is a technical term initiated by the DRAC (regional cultural authorities) in the 1990s and used to call the *musiques actuelles* using electronic amplifiers. The term '*musiques actuelles*', another institutional, and rather vague turn of phrase coined by the Ministry of Culture in the 1980s, refers to all the different contemporary styles of music, ranging from jazz to world music, from Western popular music forms to contemporary scholarly music, usually classified into three categories: jazz and improvisation; traditional music and world

²⁹⁴ Technical name for the registered association around Tarace Boulba, although in practice, the same name, Tarace Boulba is used to refer to both.

²⁹⁵ For Voukoum, the name of the registered association is the same as that of the artistic formation.

²⁹⁶ Technical name for the registered association, although in practice, the same name, Moleque de Rua is used to refer to both.

music; and *chanson*, electronic music, rock and hip hop (featuring *musiques amplifiées*). Paradoxically enough, despite being used solely in institutional cultural setting, the underlying ambiguity of the term renders it quite convenient to capture a very polymorphic category in terms of genre, justifying the choice of terminology here.²⁹⁷ Secondly, despite the funk aspect of its practice, Tarace Boulba was considered closer to the previous affinity network essentially for three reasons:

- (i) it takes the *musiques amplifiées* form on stage, but can also take an acoustic form, particularly during brass band street parades, one of its *raisons d'être*;
- (ii) its capacity to set up *mobile* musical parades, a feature common to Moleque de Rua and Voukoum; and
- (iii) the size of the formation and its form of organisation has more affinities with Moleque de Rua and Voukoum, and is inscribed in the same musical network, sharing similar cultural connections.

Amongst our selected acts, six bands fit into the category of *musiques amplifiées*: Keny Arkana (KA), La Rumeur (LR), Ministère des Affaires Populaires (MAP), Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre (OPA), Stéréotypes (ST), and the project *Mouss et Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées* (MHOC). All those groups have in common to be more modest formations than the previous category, generally featuring between 5 and 10 musicians on stage. The musical practice is not as inherently connected to the *associative* dynamic, as is the case for the three 'world music' collectives (MR, TB, VK).

Notwithstanding the diversity of the genres tackled by all six formations (hip hop, rock, chaâbi or *musette*-derived creations),²⁹⁸ the six bands revolve around a musical community with nearing cultural interests or passageways. There again, each collective of this category knows at least one or two other groups within this network. The yearly festival *Origines Contrôlées* organised by the association Tactikollectif stands out as a major portal of cultural connection of all those initiatives. If of course, the artistic nebula around Mouss & Hakim (*Origines Contrôlées*, Zebda and friends...) is involved in performing there nearly every year,

²⁹⁷ For further description and debate over definition of *musiques amplifiées*, see Touché, Marc (1998) 'Musique, vous avez dit MusiqueS?', in Quay Thévenon, Pierre ed., *Les rencontres du Grand Zebrock 98: Une nouvelle ambition pour les musiques amplifiées/actuelles en Ile de France* (Noisy-le-Sec: Chroma), pp 13-15 ; p 15. For further general description of *musiques actuelles* see also: <http://www.irma.asso.fr/-Irma-> For general debate over definition of *musiques actuelles* see also: <http://www.irma.asso.fr/IMG/pdf/HistoriqueMA-1.pdf>

²⁹⁸ The accordion used in both Mouss & Hakim and MAP comes from the *bal-musette* popular tradition, and the music of Mouss & Hakim also features undertones of Algerian châabi, a form of popular music in North Africa. As a discussion over classifications and genres is not only much beyond the scope of this thesis, but may also be deemed sterile for the purpose of the present research, for more details, see *Encyclopedia of Popular Music* (2006), 4th edn, edited by Colin Larkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

other artists have also participated to the festival: Keny Arkana and MAP at the third edition in 2006, La Rumeur at the fourth edition in 2007. This creates a loose sense of correlation between all those projects, relating them by musical and cultural affinities in the connectivist logic of the network. The bands have also met on many other occasions, not all musical such as common participation (musical or not) at forums or support gigs. For instance, Keny Arkana, OPA, and Stéréotypes contributed to the organisation (Keny Arkana, OPA), or sporadically took part (Stéréotypes) in the Appel Aux Sans Voix initiative of itinerant popular assemblies in 2007;²⁹⁹ or more rarely, this could be observed in participation to more formal debates or conferences about music and activism, as was the case for MAP and La Rumeur who were invited to the same roundtable debate at a Zebrook conference in 2007.

From the point of view of activism, while the positions defended by the artists and the forms of commitment are diverse, because of the size of the formations, their artistic practices tend to emphasise developing a political, militant discourse more than the former set of three case studies, as a major dimension of their artistic *and* political engagement. Yet, unlike the previous affinity network, the focus on the *political* is more explicit in their practice. The bands tend to reclaim the term to appropriate it as their own, but each band has its own local idiosyncrasies and specific modalities, since they are all partially informed by biographical elements. If all six collectives sympathise with specific local issues, and are often associated with *altermondialiste* or autonomous movements, the political positions implicit in the discourse of all six collectives feature the same non-sectarian aspirations to universality.

2.3 Recap figure of the proposed topography of networks:

musical communities and cultural connections between the case studies.

To sum up, the following figure (*Fig. 2*) can encapsulate concisely the connectivist logic of the network at stake for the case studies and account for the rapprochements, or musical affinities between them.³⁰⁰ Three cultural networks were envisaged, established along the lines of musical affinity. Based on observation of the organisation and practice of our case studies, along with their connections to activist politics, three communities, or ‘cultural connexions’ could be distinguished, following the musical affinities of our collectives.

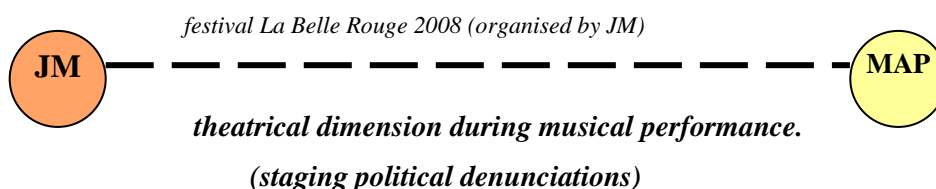
²⁹⁹ See Appendix 2 for detailed description of Appel Aux Sans Voix (AASV) initiative.

³⁰⁰ It should be noted that this very connectivist network form of social organisation partly justifies the choice of snowballing method as a method of data collection.

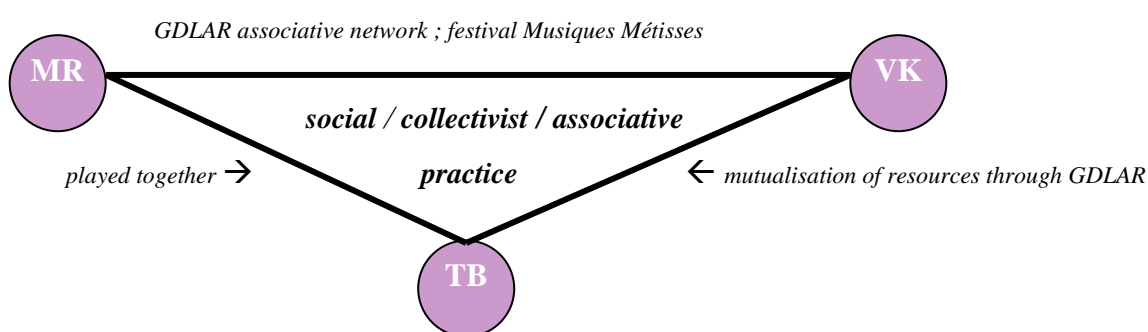
Figure 2. The connectivist logic of the network

Summary of proposed topography of internal social and cultural connections for the selected artists: the three types of musical affinity networks.³⁰¹

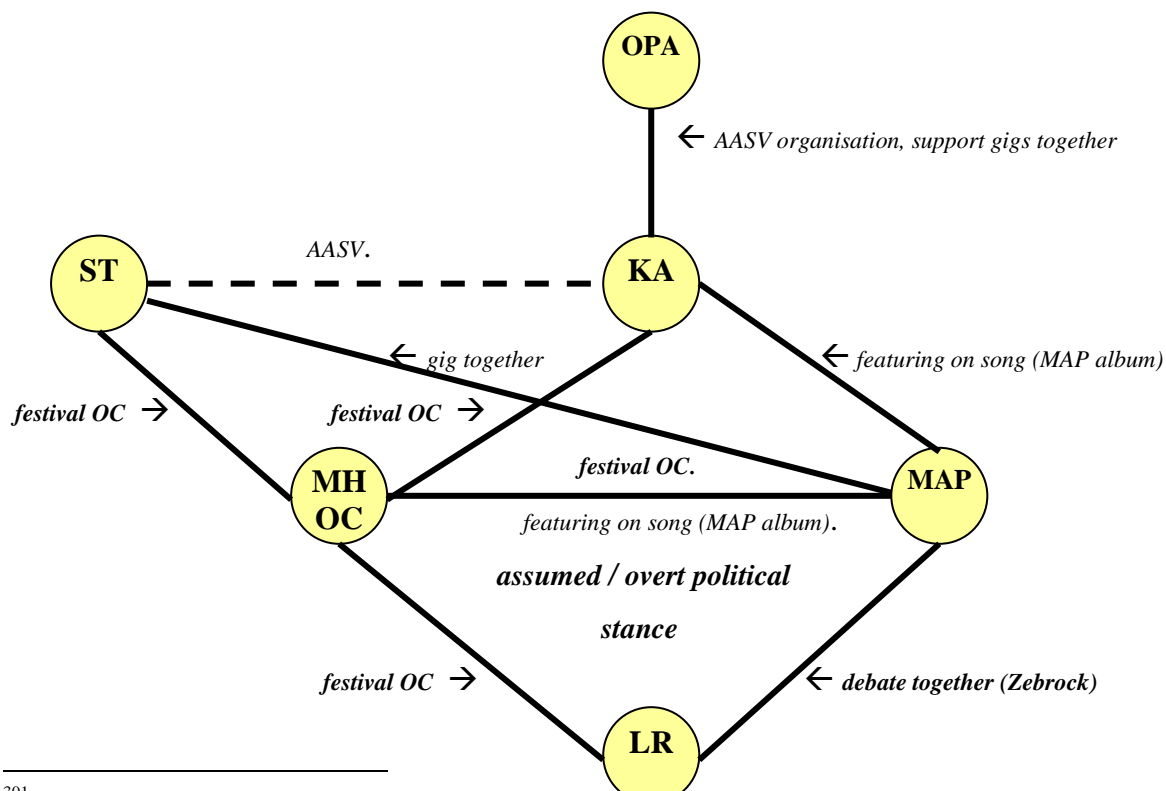
Cultural connexion #1: the ‘popular theatre’ affinity network.³⁰²



Cultural connexion #2: the ‘world music’ affinity network.



Cultural connexion #3: the ‘musiques amplifiées’ affinity network.



³⁰¹ Data based for the most part on observed connections during on empirical research (2006-2007). See Appendix 3 for comprehensive list of the empirical activities undertaken.

³⁰² MAP as been coded in yellow colour here as it mainly belongs to the ‘*musiques amplifiées*’ affinity network’, although it can also be loosely articulated to the ‘popular theatre affinity network’ as discussed above.

3. The actors and spheres of resistance: a quest for legitimacy?

After this brief schematic introduction to our groups by musical affinity, we should now be able to put our cultural resistance collectives into context. Yet situating our bands raises again an essential dynamic, underlying the whole of this research – that of symbolic appropriation. We will hence return to our conceptual proposition above of the pyramidal hierarchy (see *Fig. 1*), featuring the hypothesis of a ‘layered’ incorporation of discourse. The analysis below should allow us to not only get a sense of where this process of cultural resistance in postcolonial France fits in the global context, but also locate our artists more specifically, as examples of that resistance.

3.1 Four types of discourses.

To sum up our pyramid model, the different pyramidal layers of opposition discourse can take a cultural – or more often than not, a *countercultural* – form, but are also generally expressed in political terms with corresponding generic, broad types of political discourses. In other words within this pyramidal hierarchy, which generally depends on the degree of visibility allowed to or chosen by the group, and on the degree of democratic representation vs. democratic participation, four types of power discourses were identified:

- (i) an official, ***neoliberal discourse*** stemming typically in France from the mainstream Right or government powers, against which all our collectives are resisting;

This discourse is often denounced by the case studies approached through the cultural framework of anti-racist, or anti-discrimination discourse, or the political condemnation of state repression and police violence. For instance, a declaration, with all the technical characteristics of militant discourse insofar as it is *a capella* spoken (not sung) intervention, introduces the song ‘Démocratie zombie’ where Mista Rebel Lion (one of the three MCs of Stéréotypes) summarises this condemnation of the state playing on the legal notion of *nationality* to create differential treatment of citizens and legitimise discriminations and state violence:

Rappel: L’Etat a été condamné par la Cour Européenne des Droits de l’Homme pour l’exercice de mauvais traitements dans certains commissariats. Des discriminations d’Etat pour les étrangers, notamment dans l’accès à certains emplois ont été créés, votés sous le régime de Vichy par Pétain et Laval, elles sont toujours appliquées en 2007. Avec ça de quelle côté est la diffamation, de quelle côté est la vérité ? La morale de cette histoire banale, quand les chevaux viennent à manquer, on selle les chiens. Alors ce coup de gueule déclamé, *Démocratie Zombie*, est dédié aux familles de victimes des crimes policiers, aux immigrés victimes des lois d’expulsion, aux citoyens français et immigrés bannis

de l'égalité des droits sociaux, économiques, et politiques. Restons motivés, groupés, et dressons des barricades face aux briseurs de pensée.³⁰³

- (ii) a discourse from the *established opposition* to neoliberal *discourse* stemming typically from the institutional, government Left, echoed to an extent by a minority of our groups or networks, to a varying degree;

Yet this discourse is most often condemned by the case studies approached as much as neoliberal discourse. The position held by the Parti Socialiste, its socialist reformist empty rhetoric and well-known liberal shift since the 1980s, is typically viewed by grassroots cultural networks with disillusion or scepticism, and as contributing to discrediting not only the idea of an opposition, or alternative to neoliberal discourse, but even politics altogether. In the song 'Lillo' standing as a manifest of their complex, multicultural identity, MAP encapsulates this mood:

Lille, le fief, le pays des socialos
De la gauche caviar discriminante et démagog
Dans nos murs comme l'amiante, invisible et dangereuse
Franc-maçonne, vicieuse, paternaliste et mafieuse
Ca s'la raconte intègre, authentique et populaire
Et à chaque mandat ; ils nous la font la l'envers !³⁰⁴

- (iii) an alternative discourse from the semi-established, or *semi-institutionalised opposition* to neoliberal *discourse*, and to a varying degree (from mild reticence to strong hostility), to its established opposition: stemming typically from alternative Left political parties, global social movements, trade unions, and part of the *milieu associatif*;

If this discourse is received quite differently from one collective to the other, ranging from general adhesion to the principle (Jolie Môme) to total rejection of institutions (Appel Aux Sans Voix), it is generally accepted or recognised as a discourse of *legitimate opposition*. This can be exemplified by the artists amongst our bands who brought their support to the LCR in the past. In Toulouse for instance, there is a good syncretism of the trends of opposition. In 1996, the LCR funded the '*Motivés, chants de lutte*' musical project, enabling the creation of the autonomous cultural network Tactikollectif.³⁰⁵ Members of the Tactikollectif also involved in the Motivé-e-s political collective for the local elections in 2001, also officially supported the LCR candidate Olivier Besancenot for the first round of the

³⁰³ Mista Rebel Lion, 'Démocratie Zombie' in *Contrôle Surprise* (EP, 2007) ; this self-produced single also features a small booklet put together by the network FASTI with legal information entitled 'code de déontologie de la police'.

³⁰⁴ MAP, in 'Lillo' (*Debout Là-D'dans!* LP, 2006).

³⁰⁵ A musical project with covers of famous songs of resistance taken from the international history of social struggles, including amongst others 'Le chant des partisans', 'Hasta siempre', 'Bella ciao', 'La butte rouge', 'Bandiera rossa', 'Le temps des cerises'. The CD sold over 80,000 copies.

2002 presidential elections.³⁰⁶ The LCR had also a wide range of musical collectives playing in support at its meetings: Tarace Boulba in 2001,³⁰⁷ Stéréotypes in 2007,³⁰⁸ or MAP and Mouss & Hakim, who performed together the song ‘Salutations révolutionnaires’, widely used afterwards by the LCR at its meetings during the 2007 presidential elections campaign, a strong call to unity of the resistance with clear revolutionary undertones in the chorus:

Quand faut y aller faut y aller
 Unis et solidaires derrière la même bannière
 Quand faut y aller faut y aller
 Lève le poing refuse ce bond en arrière
 Quand faut y aller faut y aller
 Ne pas baisser les bras face à toute cette misère
 Quand faut y aller faut y aller
 Rendez-vous en enfer salutations révolutionnaires.³⁰⁹

(iv) a non-established, *grassroots opposition* to neoliberal *discourse* and its established opposition, and to a varying degree (from mild reticence to strong hostility), to its semi-established opposition: stemming typically from informal associations, grassroots community collectives, organised autonomous political movements, semi-spontaneous activist movements.

All the case studies approached are in some way or another embedded into this form of discourse insofar as it tends to emerge from networks of local cultural activity or political resistance. However certain collectives (such as OPA and Keny Arkana on the Appel Aux Sans Voix platform) seemed keener than others to defend the necessity of local *autonomy* and the rhetoric of the *grassroots* logic. Acutely conscious of the pitfall of incorporation, frustrated with institutionalisation, seen as reformist disempowerment of the masses, this kind of position, tends to be more participatory and local but also less visible and arguably, difficult to structure towards more global social change. Emerging after a year of setting up grassroots, local ‘popular assemblies’ all around France with the *Appel Aux Sans Voix* project (AASV), Keny Arkana encapsulates this view in the song ‘Alterlude: le changement viendra d’en bas’:

Réapproprions nous nos vies,
 On a besoin de créer de nouvelles choses.
 Entre partis et syndicats trop de militants ont trouvé leur opium [...]
 Désobéissance: arrêtons de coopérer
 Le changement viendra d’en-bas
 Autre chose et autrement.³¹⁰

³⁰⁶ See Appendix 2 for detailed presentation of Mouss & Hakim case study.

³⁰⁷ TB internal documents collected during fieldwork.

³⁰⁸ See Appendix 3 for list of the empirical activities undertaken.

³⁰⁹ in MAP feat Mouss et Hakim, ‘Salutations révolutionnaires’ (on *Les bronzés font du ch’ti* LP, 2009).

³¹⁰ in Keny Arkana, ‘Alterlude : le changement viendra d’en-bas’ (*Désobéissance* EP, 2008).

3.2 The paradigm of legitimacy and the three discursive power networks.

Finally, a last set of parameters could be added to the present proposed conceptual model to map out the empirical idiosyncrasies observed. Again it should be highlighted that this is only a model featuring trends and tendencies. On the whole, considered from the standpoint of visibility and participation, within the four types of discourses we have just identified above, three types of networks were identified. Those three networks, which we will call ‘discursive power networks’, are constituted along the three ‘borders’ between each of the four layers in the hierarchy of political visibility and participation (see *Fig. 1*). Those networks are situated at the point of connection between every layer, hence creating mobility in the dynamic of discursive domination and its resistance – upward and downward mobility within the pyramid, if we look at *Figure 1*. Considered from the perspective of political discourse, the variants of visibility and participation merge into the discriminating paradigm of *legitimacy*. Those three specific networks are:

(i) *Legitimate discourse:*

Networks considered as legitimate, official, and established discourse;

Point of connection between discourses (i) and (ii) described above

(neoliberal discourse <> established opposition to neoliberal discourse).

(ii) *Legitimised resistance:*

Networks established, or semi-established as a legitimate form of resistance discourse;

Point of connection between discourses (ii) and (iii) described above

(established opposition to neoliberal discourse <> semi-institutionalised opposition).

(iii) *Non-legitimised resistance:*

Networks of resistance seeking to establish legitimacy of their discourse;

Point of connection between discourses (iii) and (iv) described above

(semi-institutionalised opposition to neoliberal discourse <> grassroots opposition).

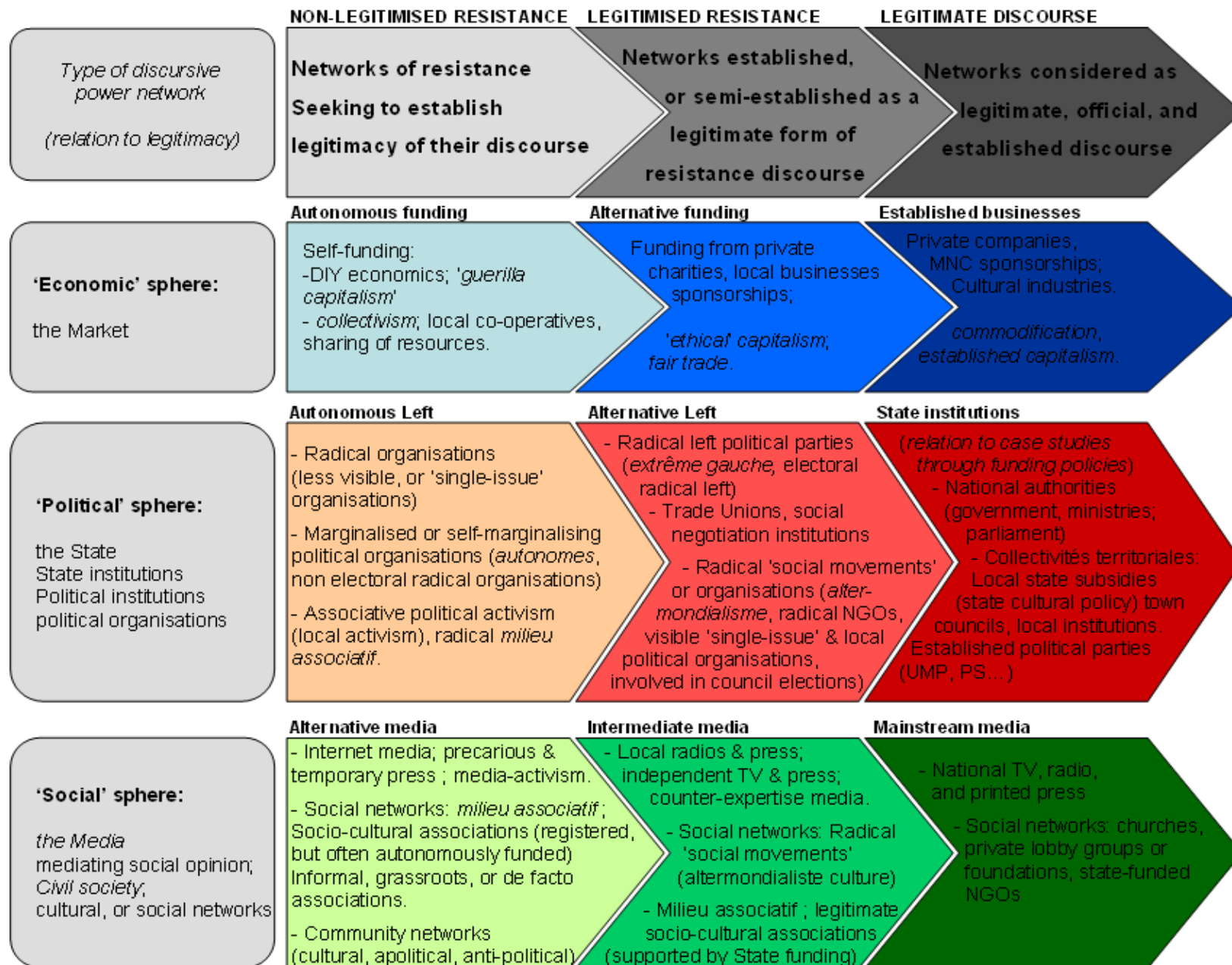
3.3 Confronting the actors of the three spheres to the three types of legitimacy.

From then, the three discursive power networks identified in schematic terms in the pyramid, also interact with the three ‘actors’ (the market; the state and political institutions; civil society) corresponding to the three spheres of influence, or poles (economic, political, social) where the struggle for re-appropriation of power takes place. It should be noted that the political pole will hence logically feature political organisations or institutions of resistance to the political institutions. Also, the authority of civil society is often embodied by

the media, regardless of their influence. The following table (*Fig. 3*) may summarise a typology of the resulting power networks identified as significant for our artists.

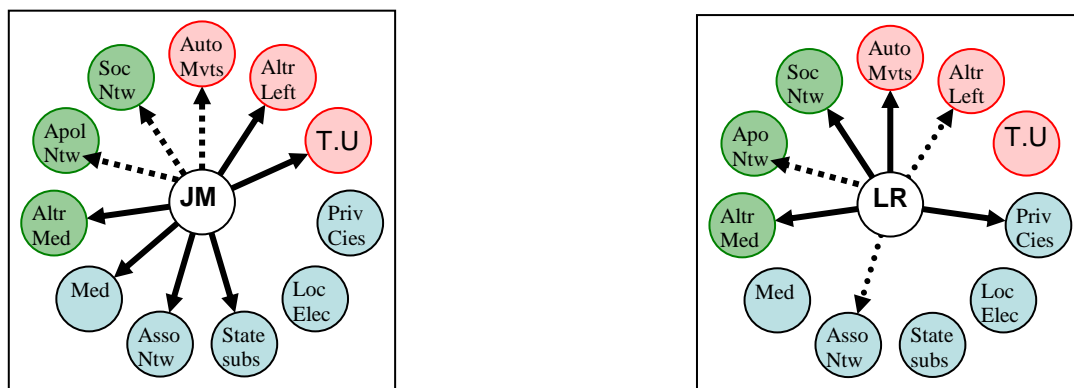
Expanding on the parameters enunciated above (*Fig. 1*), the present conceptual model proposes to schematically consider the paradigm of legitimacy, imposed by the dominant discourse, as a vector logically shaping, and producing different types of power networks. In this model, those networks are shaped by two essential parameters: the level of legitimacy and the type of ‘pole’, or sphere of activity. It should be underlined that the proposition that the networks depend on the level of legitimisation of discourse – with the dominant discourse producing two forms of resistance, one resistance legitimised by dominant discourse, and one not so much recognised or legitimised by dominant discourse, or still seeking to establish its own legitimacy – should be dissociated from normative judgement. In other words, distinguishing between two types of resistance does not imply that one is more *authentic* than the other: they both emerge from different traditions and the division is produced by a hierarchical configurative framework of discrimination and differential domination. Then the model proposes to further classify those three different discourses according to the three poles (economic, political, social) wherein the ideology of neoliberal globalisation operates.

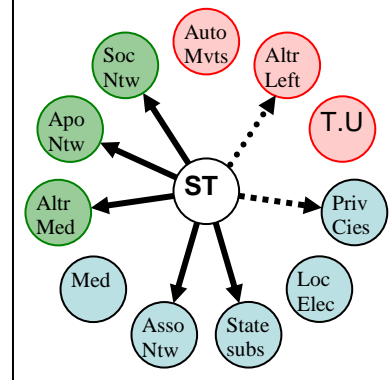
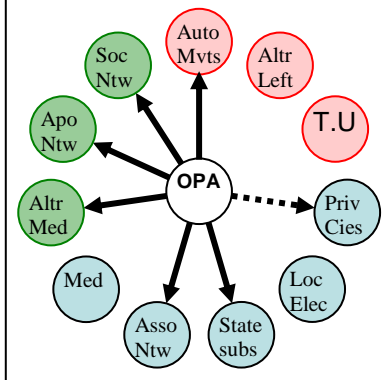
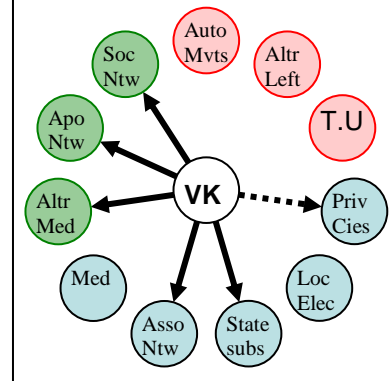
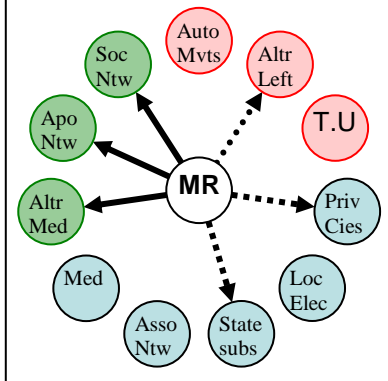
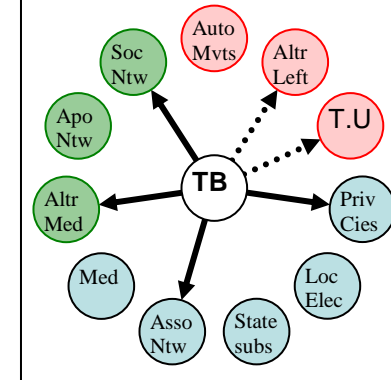
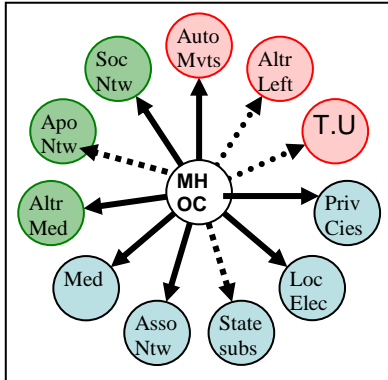
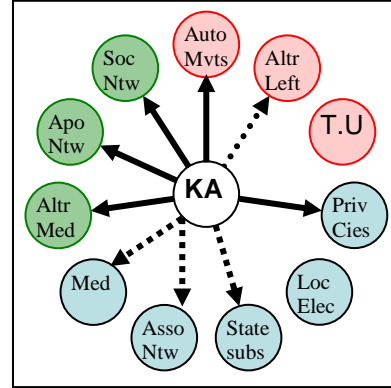
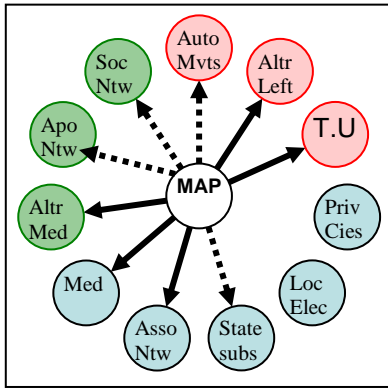
Figure 3. The legitimacy discourse in practice. *Typology of power networks set in the three possible poles of activity.*

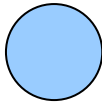


It would be interesting to highlight a few notable results of this crossing of parameters. First, within all three spheres, it looks like the level of inter-penetration between the economic, the political, and the social is a strategy for establishing a form of hegemony, whether in ‘dominant discourse’ or in resistance striving at autonomy. Secondly, within the ‘political sphere’, it looks like the electoral factor – participation in elections – is a determining element to endow the networks with a sense of legitimacy, thereby belonging to the identifiable, political sphere. The networks not involved in elections are often hence more easily situated in the *blind spot (angle mort)* of politics, although other forms of legitimation also exist, usually based on a supposed level of popular support from civil society (such as the recently created trade unions or the *altermondialiste* ‘social movements’). Finally, the least legitimised side of the ‘social sphere’ comprises of a whole range of expressions standing at the outskirts of the identification with a *resistance per se*. In other words, experiences of the social world akin to the experience of the private sphere stand as a blurry, potential zone of resistance insofar as it stands as a primary step of socialisation outside the private sphere. In this context, as shall be discussed below, certain specific *apolitical* (denial of politics) or *anti-political* (rejection of politics) expressions emerging out of a local community network may still be construed in political terms of casual, informal resistance to hegemony in the social sphere. All of our artists have a specific relation to those three spheres, or power networks. The following figure (Fig. 4) summarizes the relationship each of our case studies has to those three spheres, or power networks.

Fig. 4: Relation between case studies and power networks







Official networks, powers, and institutions:



Media: Main TV & radios & newspapers
(TF1, M6, France 2/3, Le Monde, Libé, France Inter, Europe 1...)



Private companies or charities (sponsoring & funding)



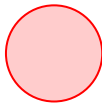
State subsidies through policy framework (*politiques culturelles*)



Electoral involvement: into local council or local elections



Associative networks officially established
(*de jure* status of *association*)



Official political networks of resistance to official powers:



Trade Unions (CFDT/CFTC CGT, SUD, FO, CNT...)



Official political parties/groups of the Alternative Left, typically with membership policy: *altermondialiste*, *extrême-gauche* (e.g., Attac, PC, LCR)



Autonomous political movements:
1. typically deriving from the associative tradition & structured around tight informal networks (esp. FSQP, Motivé-e-s, MIB, MIR)
2. *Libertaire*, anarchist networks or squat scene.



Non official social networks:



Alternative media (Internet, local radios, small reviews, fanzines)



Commitment or collective concern by social issues but open refusal to support any political movement – “apolitical” networks



Informal, unofficial associations (established *de facto*) & community networks

Type relation between case study & network:



Explicit, direct or public/openly stated relation
(whether collaborative, critical or radically oppositional)



Implicit, indirect or personal relation

On the whole, as the figure shows, the relational configuration can vary a lot from one collective to the next. This endows resistance with a general sense of heterogeneity and hybridity, as the type of relation our case studies entertain to the power networks give consistence, shape, and political consistency to a whole array of small different positions on a broader axis of resistance to the dominant spheres. Our collectives all have in common a particular concern in establishing a form of symbolic resistance through their musical production, which can take, or naturally carry a more or less political significance. In that sense, our bands tend to have a privileged relation either to the ‘legitimised resistance’ category, or to the ‘non-legitimised resistance’ discussed above (*Fig. 3*). Sometimes the relationship can be privileged, or of strong opposition. At other times, the relationship can be very loosely existent or informal.

If we look for instance at the relationship some of our artists have to trade unions, we can notice very sharp differences from one collective to the next. Considering their declarations in the press that they do not vote and do not really see the point of going to demonstrations in France because they do not feel represented by the organised contestation, it would be fair to assume that La Rumeur’s relation to trade unions is one of mild hostility, or at best non-existent. As to Voukoum, the collective tended to be opposed to trade union bureaucracy as they put forward a relentless anti-authoritarian, anti-colonial, autonomist stance. But this position does not stem from an immutable principle or orthodoxy as the 2009 carnival showed. In February 2009, the carnival season, the highlight of Voukoum’s activity, was cancelled due to the month long general strike – a movement unprecedented in Guadeloupe in terms of scope, radicality and duration since the 1960s. Voukoum went ahead and organised a night *déboulé* (‘parade’ in Creole) and marched in the streets of Bas-du-Bourg with Liyannaj Kont Pwofitasyon (LKP), an umbrella organisation of Guadelupian trade unions.³¹¹ Specifically tailored to the strike, their *Déboulé An-Tan-Révolisyon* parade looked like a demonstration and celebrated the insurrection of slaves against their masters.³¹²

On the other hand, while Tarace Boulba members have a casual, informal relationship to trade unions, with members being individually affiliated but the band not supporting officially any trade union, Jolie Môme has a more assertive, supportive and privileged link to most trade unions, except the CFDT whose political position they have condemned. This is all the more

³¹¹ LKP: *Liyannaj Kont Pwofitasyon*, an umbrella organisation of approximately 50 trade unions and social movements in Guadeloupe which spearheaded the général strike beginning in January 2009. See LKP website: <http://www.lkp-gwa.org/>

³¹² See extracts of the *déboulé* at: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7bix9_carnaval-en-temps-revolution-voukou_music

true since the trial they had against the CFDT. In April 2005, Jolie Môme joined the Coordination des Intermittents et des Précaires (CIP) in a peaceful action of protest against the CFDT's collaborative stance with the Fillon plan of retirement scheme reform. The CIP occupied the trade union premises to demand an explanation on their political position, and more solidarity with the rank and file from the trade union cadres. The CFDT sued two activists, including Jolie Môme founding figure Michel Roger, for trespass of private property, violent disorder, violence to property and theft (of a poster). The trial lasted more than three years, until in September 2010, when the two activists were discharged by a final verdict.³¹³

In the end, what the last two figures (*Fig. 3 & Fig. 4*) tend to show is that the relation our artists entertain to the different spheres where their activity is deployed (economic, political, social), discourses (dominant, and of legitimised or non-legitimised resistance) and the corresponding 'power networks' is fragile and evolutive, idiosyncratic and fluctuant. If it varies from one case study to the next, it also gives a distinctive shape to the dynamic of re-appropriation of symbols, discourses and representations launched to assert one's place (or *existence*, a necessarily political struggle according to Sayad) through forms of cultural resistance – in the case of our research musical practices. The specificity of those relations plays a key role in determining the subsequent symbolic configurations. As the relational nature of resistance surfaces as a crucial stake, further, detailed discussions of those connections will be carried out into more details below in the remaining chapters of this research.

³¹³ See press release of the trial's verdict at: <http://www.cie-joliemome.org/spip.php?article496>

Chapter IV.

Resisting ideological repression: the politicisation of musical practice

1. Social vs. political engagement?

Forms of militant commitment to cultural resistance

- 1.1 The initial commitment: empirically or ideologically motivated, imposed vs. chosen?
- 1.2 Relation to politics in cultural resistance: social vs. political commitment?
- 1.3 Political appropriation as a legitimization process

2. The return of the repressed: musical expression as symbolic power

- 2.1 The return of the postcolonial repressed: reversal of the stigma, dialectics of empowerment
- 2.2 The reversal of symbolic violence: symbolic counter-violence as resistance
- 2.3 The politics of symbolic resistance: cultural survival, collective spaces

3. The political scope of cultural resistance

- 3.1 Culture as politics? Confronting theoretical trends to the heterogeneity of empirical realities
- 3.2 The locus of radical political expression: the relational character of cultural resistance
- 3.3 The scales of resistance: the spectrum of political engagement in cultural resistance

Conclusion. Political denunciation as a cultural practice

After a broad description and a general topography of the field, the following four chapters (IV-VII) shall carry out a more in-depth study of the mechanism of cultural resistance, examining the extent and forms of resistance, along with the fields of struggle wherein it develops, and the contradictions it generates in the process. This revisiting of the theoretical material in the light of the empirical data introduced in the previous three chapters could aim to design more specific conceptual tools, which will then be applied to a more concrete analysis of cultural resistance.

In the present chapter, as a point of entry into our analysis, a re-examination of the theory enounced above in the light of the fieldwork shall be undertaken to appreciate empirically how the politicisation of musical practice is activated, and musical expression appropriated as cultural resistance. In that respect, the tradition of *détournement* has been observed to be widely resorted to within the case studies as a strategy of politicisation of cultural resistance.

1. Social vs. political engagement?

Forms of militant commitment to cultural resistance

The preceding topographic accounts suggest that if the main protagonists of the selected case studies of cultural resistance are essentially musical collectives with a mission rooted primarily in artistic production, all collectives also have a form of implication with a particular political commitment. In other words, all case studies have a privileged relation in their musical practice with activist politics, yet, as was already underlined, this interaction can take very different forms. This section attempts to further qualify this type of relation.

1.1 The initial commitment: empirically or ideologically motivated, imposed vs. chosen?

First and foremost, the case studies all differ insofar as they all have different and somehow idiosyncratic stories to account for their initial political commitment.

Ideological vs. empirical?

While the engagement with a more or less politicised form of resistance often emerges from biographical elements, the ‘ideological aspect’ of the political resistance is also a significant factor in the initial political commitment. Through their theatrical practice, Jolie Môme for instance have developed a militant coherence and a political perspective that may easily be seen as ideologically motivated. The play *Barricade*, renewing the legacy of the Paris Commune, is a striking example of a deliberately assumed militant *Weltanschauung*, with quite readable ideological choices inscribed in the political revolutionary tradition.

In other instances, the initial encounter with political resistance is more empirically rooted. The case of Moleque de Rua is interesting in that respect. Founder of the collective, José Carlos Gomes Ferreira (a.k.a. Duda) was a lawyer and syndicalist before he became Duda, the musician. His active experience with the creation of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) a Marxist workers’ party founded in 1980 in São Paulo, was traumatic. Sourly disappointed with the weight of bureaucratic structures, reformist compromises, the powerlessness and corruption taking place even within radical organisations, Ferreira (Duda) became disillusioned with politics altogether, and from 1983, turned to musical practice with the creation of Moleque de Rua to take action locally in his deprived favela neighbourhood of Vila Santa Catarina. The resulting *anti-political* stance of Moleque de Rua stemming from this experience illustrates how the political engagement in cultural resistance may also be chiefly empirically motivated, derived from confrontation with the political context and experience of the activist sphere. The case of La Rumeur is another interesting example of

gradual politicisation of cultural practice explained by biographical elements. In this process, the engagement with militant politics stemmed from an initial deliberate strategy of resistance to maintain artistic integrity, but the stance became progressively politicised, shaped by symbolic and judicial repression, externally imposed. Ironically enough, the overwhelming perception today of the collective as being steadfastly politically committed, not only in discursive terms as a stance in their lyrics, but also in their daily lives as militants, comes mostly from the trial Hamé, lead figure of La Rumeur, has been involved in. In this situation, the band had to face an incredibly harsh repression and judicial harassment – a case as yet unparalleled on the whole contemporary French musical scene. Over the years, the line of defence became increasingly polished and deliberately politicised, from one trial to another, turning the case into an affair. Yet here, the process of politicisation of discourse follows a different logic than in the case of Jolie Môme or OPA, wherein the political public stance is initially informed by a consciously ideological choice, preconceived politically. However we should keep it mind that these two forms of initial implication with political commitment are only theoretical tendencies and not mutually exclusive. In practice, the distinction is not so clear-cut, and these two motivations underlying activism tend to overlap.

The dialectic between social experience and political consciousness in artistic practice

On the whole, for certain collectives (La Rumeur, Keny Arkana, MAP, Moleque de Rua and arguably, Voukoum) the initial interest in a form of politicisation is essentially explained by biographical elements, making the interaction with politics more personal and usually shaping the artistic productions explicitly. One of the major concerns underlying the artistic practice is to articulate a private, implicit or personal militant commitment to a collective and public cultural practice. Keny Arkana summarises well this political role of the artist as public figure and a ‘loudspeaker’ for the voices of the voiceless (*sans-voix*), and focusing on the notion of *prise de parole*: ‘dans mon album je fais pas des cours de politique ça reste de l’artistique. Mais l’art ça a la force de réveiller des sentiments chez les gens’.³¹⁴ This approach can also occasion temporary projects which imitate the form of the associative network and merge social, cultural, and political elements in TAZ (Temporary Autonomous Zones)³¹⁵ of alternative collective spaces, as the case of the itinerant local social forum *Appel*

³¹⁴ Interview Keny Arkana retrieved at: <http://www.nuesblog.com/>

³¹⁵ To use Hakim Bey’s well-known concept. See Bey, Hakim (1985), *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone: Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia).

Aux Sans Voix (AASV) illustrates: ‘[R]estauration d’une parole libre et horizontale, afin de trouver des solutions concrètes à l’impasse où mène le système actuel’.³¹⁶ The mobile autonomous project clearly aimed at a politicisation of the grassroots.

Yet the cultural activism resulting from an articulation of the personal political commitment of an artist to a collective cultural practice is diverse and multidimensional, and may range from short speeches made by artists during performances (observed in all case studies) to specific militant actions. Valid for all our collectives, the case of free performances, or benefit gigs (on a voluntary basis for the artists, but with varying modalities), is a characteristic example of how musical practice may be seen as a means to defend a specific political cause. For instance, in 2007, the band MAP organised a concert in the centre of Lille for the collective CSP59 (Collectif Sans-Papiers 59), in order to make the man in the street aware of what is rarely described in mainstream media: the concrete consequences of the immigration policy choices implemented by what most French call ‘Ministry of Immigration and National Identity’, the living conditions of undocumented migrants, and the need for solidarity. The full name of the latter Ministry is ‘Ministry of Immigration, Integration, and National Identity and Interdependent’ Development (*Ministère de l’Immigration, de l’Intégration, de l’Identité Nationale et du Développement Solidaire*). Created in May 2007 with the inception of the Sarkozy presidency by the first Fillon government, the Ministry, headed by Brice Hortefeux until he was replaced in January 2009 by Eric Besson, generated a substantial wave of hostility from left opposition, denouncing the measure as a further step in the making of a discriminatory and racist social consensus. The Ministry proved in opinion polls to be spectacularly controversial, and more often than not, very unpopular, to the extent that it was removed in November 2010.³¹⁷ Although there is a growing sense of awareness since the inception of the Ministry of Immigration and National Identity, the media treatment of *sans-papiers* has overwhelmingly been a caricature of voices *confiscated* by hegemonic discourse appropriating, and speaking *on their behalf* and *in their name*. More generally, the MAP initiative with CSP59 could be seen as an endeavour to reclaim the street, and the city centre in particular, as a free public, and political space of *equality* for all citizens.

Comparative study of two trials and their artistic applications: La Rumeur, Jolie Môme

³¹⁶ KA webreview.

³¹⁷ See Valluy J. ed (2008). *Xénophobie de gouvernement, nationalisme d’Etat. Cultures & Conflits*, 69. Printemps 2008. Online resource retrieved at: <http://conflits.revues.org/index10183.html>

For a good example summarising the two different tendencial approaches to political engagement, we shall return to La Rumeur and Jolie Môme, and undertake a comparison of the trials both collectives had to endure. Limited due the difference in nature, duration and cost of trial, along with the scope and extent of the case, the comparison can still be useful. While both Jolie Môme and La Rumeur have attempted to make a deliberately explicit *political* case or their court case, the band La Rumeur and the company Jolie Môme differ in the way they initially became involved with the judicial apparatus. While the hip hop collective (LR) was initially compelled into taking an explicit political stance against the state (Ministry of the Interior), the theatre company (JM) initially made a more consciously political choice of civil disobedience resulting in two activists being sued by the CFDT.

Equally, both collectives have politicised and exploited their own political condition in artistic terms. La Rumeur steadily makes obvious references to their court case in their songs:

Sous surveillance des R.G. et ce quoi que nous fassions
Bref qui veut nous faire la leçon.³¹⁸

Or even more explicitly:

Inscrivez greffier, le prévenu n'exprime aucun regret
Veuillez verser au dossier, à charge pour dommages et intérêt,
Article 25 bis, alinéa premier.³¹⁹

But the band claims to stand up to this case as belonging to part of a more general resistance to a much broader ideological dynamic of oppression:

Et la peur me précède à chaque fenêtre ouverte
[...C]ette peur, son odeur, ses chiffres, ses penseurs,
Ses marchands, ses clients, ses balles sifflantes en châtiment,
Cette peur par milliers de programmes herziens, son ministère, ses gardiens,
Cette peur au poids de plomb, par décrets d'application.³²⁰

As for Jolie Môme, one of the theatre company's most recent productions, called *Procès-Spectacle* cleverly exploits hyperbole and the history of militant struggles to launch a mock trial of many instances of resistance to domination, making quite funny veiled analogies between historical figures of oppression (alluding for instance to the Roman empire under Caesar, the French colonial regime, or to religious institutions like the Catholic Church during the Inquisition) and many contemporary figures (as varied as powerful political or media figures, trade union bureaucrats, charities and NGOs, celebrities...).

³¹⁸ RG: Renseignements Généraux, the French equivalent of MI5. From the track 'Non sous-titré' in *Du cœur à l'Outrage*, 2007.

³¹⁹ From the track 'Inscrivez greffier', in *Regain de Tension*, 2004.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

1.2 Relation to politics in cultural resistance: social vs. political commitment ?

Social vs. political engagement: la politique ou le politique?

On the whole, two forms of resistance emerge. On the one hand, a commitment unambiguously identifiable as *political*, assumed and reclaimed as such, tends to be usually articulated in a non-sectarian fashion, in traditional forms of political mobilisation (demonstrations, actions, mobilisations, forums and discussions) around which musical practice is resorted to as a symbolic device to merge the struggles together. The plethora of militant cultural events organised by Jolie Môme, MAP, or Mouss & Hakim can be *a priori* inscribed in that approach. On the other hand, a more complex form of commitment, often acknowledged as *social*, has been observed, generating an intricate sphere of cultural resistance insofar as it either merges cultural practice and political claims, or on the contrary, dismisses the traditional conception of activist politics altogether to replace it with the politics of recognition. By ‘politics of recognition’ we refer to a trend which emerged in the discourses of 1970s ‘new social movements’ taking *identity* and *difference* as political categories and establishing the right to dignity of difference as the most legitimate political claim of identity politics.³²¹ Nancy Fraser undertook to analyse this form of politics and put it in context, conceiving of justice as a set of three distinct yet interrelated dimensions: *distribution* (of resources), *recognition* (of the varying contributions of different groups), and *representation* (in the linguistic and discursive field).³²² Fraser famously tried to overcome what she considers an artificial divide between the ‘distribution’ trend, springing from the Marxist social theory, and the ‘recognition’ trend, identified with post-structuralism and critical theory, arguing that both forms are necessary to elaborate a valid critique.³²³

In practice, the ‘politics of recognition’ produces a form of resistance which can be paralleled to what Negri and Hardt have conceptualised as the *multitude*:

Certainly, there must be a moment when reappropriation [of wealth from capital] and self-organization [of the multitude] reach a threshold and configure a real event. This is when the political is really affirmed—when the genesis is complete and self-valorization, the cooperative convergence of subjects, and the proletarian management of production become a constituent power. [...] We do not have any models to offer for this event. Only the *multitude* through its practical experimentation will offer the models and determine when and how the possible becomes real.³²⁴

³²¹ See Wallerstein (2004b), *op. cit.*

³²² See Fraser, Nancy & Honneth, Alex (2003), *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso).

³²³ See Fraser, Nancy, ‘Rethinking recognition’, in *New Left Review* 3, May-June 2000. Available at: <http://newleftreview.org/A2248>

³²⁴ Hardt & Negri (2000), *ibid.*, p 411. See also account above, and Hardt & Negri (2004), *op. cit.*

In that form of engagement, actors tend to adopt a variety of stances regarding politics, depending of the understanding of the term. Some groups (such as autonomous political activists) reject the narrow understanding of what politics has come to mean but embrace the struggle to appropriate the notion of politics and *reclaim it as theirs*, interpreting it in its general sense. This is typically the approach of the Appel Aux Sans Voix (AASV) initiative. Other groups (such as Moleque de Rua or Voukoum) tend to reject altogether the notion of politics, which they interpret in the narrower sense as set by governing powers, hence *disowning it as theirs*. In essence, they tend to equate *politics* not with *le politique* (the political, or politics as a concept), but with *la politique* (political practice, and polity as an application), i.e., *professional politics* featuring electoral politics, governing powers, political institutions contributing to reproducing and further entrenching domination and oppression. In that sense, while the former tendency is liable to struggle for discursive appropriation of the signifier *politics*, the latter will frequently tend to relinquish politics as a signifier and often invest the terms *social* and the signifying field of *culture* – and counterculture or alternative, grassroots practices – as discursive spaces where they can create alternatives to neoliberal domination exercised in this pyramidal form. To a certain extent, this confirms the hypothesis formulated above – namely, cultural resistance can be an alternative form of political re-appropriation in that it is a way of accessing collective social identification outside traditional political practices, perceived as reproducing exclusion.

Self-definition of relation to politics: substitution or recuperation of terminology

As mentioned above, these two main types of engagement with politics are also shaped by the affinities our artists develop with the different discourses of opposition to neoliberalism. How they label themselves also matters: those affinities affect the way the collectives self-define, or more often than not, *redefine* their relation to politics. This is why while some collectives may agree with the relative discredit of the term ‘political’, they proceed to a *recuperation* of terminology, claiming to restore the original sense of the word ‘political’.³²⁵ This is typically what Keny Arkana summarises in the song ‘Alterlude: le changement viendra d’en bas’, featuring audio extracts of recordings from the Appel Aux

³²⁵ See Starr’s distinction between the logic of substitution and the logic of recuperation in the process of re-appropriation in Starr Peter (1995), *Logics of Failed Revolt: French Theory after May ’68* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), p 15.

Sans Voix forums: '*La politique se la réapproprier, la parole se la réapproprier, la rue se la réapproprier, les maisons se les réapproprier, se réapproprier tout!*'.³²⁶

On the other hand, as discussed above, for some groups the term 'political' has become totally discredited and synonymous with the political class (i.e., ruling class) or with corrupted institutional power and they refuse to use it to identify their action (Voukoum, Moleque de Rua). They prefer to refer to the term 'social' when they qualify their action of resistance to neoliberalism or the action of their collective, choosing the process of *substitution* in terminology in order to re-appropriate socialisation. The term 'substitution' here is borrowed from Peter Starr's analysis of the process of re-appropriation of discourse in the immediate aftermath of May '68. He sees a distinction between a 'logic of recuperation' and a 'logic of substitution', both strategies of resistance against the incorporation of radical critique to dominant discourse. The people resorting to logic of recuperation would struggle to reclaim, or *repossess as its own* a term, slogan, or discourse – for instance 'political', 'Marxist', 'communist', 'revolution'. On the contrary, those following the logic of substitution would tend to discard those terms as inadequate and *disown* them. They had better substitute them with other terms deemed more appropriate, thereby establishing a new linguistic territory which they totally hold symbolic power over.³²⁷

The latter form of resistance usually generates a certain ambiguity in relation to activism. For instance, while Tarace Boulba claim to develop their practice with a *social consciousness* ('*conscience sociale*') in mind,³²⁸ they also have frequent and clear affinities with trade unions, but those remain implicit, or not openly stated.³²⁹ The collective could hence be construed as implicitly committed to a traditional form of political resistance, yet the term 'social' is substituted for the term 'political'.

The two networks Les Gamins and KMK (association around the hip hop crew Stéréotypes) are also interesting and ambiguous cases, since the collectives qualify their socio-cultural animation (SCA) activity as *action citoyenne*, which may be viewed as social (or implicitly political), but equally as an apolitical type of commitment.³³⁰ In terms of terminology, a shift should be noted: the term *action citoyenne* replaces other terms that could be employed connoting more explicitly political resistance, such as 'militant', 'activist', and ultimately, 'political' or even 'social movement'. This *substitution*, or

³²⁶ From the track 'Alterlude: le changement viendra d'en bas', in *Désobéissance*, 2008.

³²⁷ See Starr (1995), *ibid.*

³²⁸ Interview with Rachid Ouai, Paris, June 2007.

³²⁹ Informal interview with Salem (member of Tarace Boulba), late May 2006.

³³⁰ In practice though, the dichotomy between discourse and action shall prove that the reality and nature of the action is more complex and militant, as shall be discussed below.

terminological shift would hence facilitate a form of depoliticisation through a shift in the understanding of the term ‘social’. Yet it would be simplistic to construe the term ‘social’ as a hidden signifier of depoliticisation. In that respect, for Voukoum, the terms ‘social’ as well as ‘cultural’ have ‘political connotations’.³³¹ As a cultural movement, fighting against social exclusion, youth delinquency, and the discrimination of social recognition for the Creole community, Voukoum’s discourse and productions certainly feature expressions carrying politically repressed elements. To those community organisers, creating another indigenous culture rooted in a fixed, social *locus*, is the cement of a social alternative, whereas resorting to the traditional political routes of protest is bound to be re-appropriated because it is too attached to the cogs of representative democracy and does not clearly emerge from a grassroots, participative process.

Appropriation of the political: processes of reconfiguration of resistance

Yet, Mouss & Hakim, MAP, OPA and Keny Arkana resort to both forms of commitment, as all four collectives attempt to be present on all fields of *engagement*, juggling between a militant cultural practice and practices aiming to reactivate and renew a *culture de l’engagement*. For instance, in April 2007, MAP spontaneously organised a street gig in Paris after a demonstration around the new laws around *immigration choisie*.³³² In May 2008, Keny Arkana came to play in front of the Vincennes detention centre during a mobilisation to release the detainees.³³³ Less spontaneous, the festival Origines Contrôlées organised every year by Tactikollectif is also a sphere of confluence and reconfiguration of militant engagement.

1.3 Political appropriation as a legitimisation process

The activist stance in cultural resistance: politics of recognition vs. legitimate politics?

In addition, when pitted against the question of social recognition, this distinction between social (or politically implicit) commitment and political commitment – with the particular understanding of terms explained above – features a division between a legitimate form of activism, easy to identify hence well recognised, and a more tentative form of

³³¹ Amédée on a debate about the legacy of *créolité*, 25th May 2006.

³³² Interview with Saïdou Dias, Lille, 7th November 2007. See Appendix 6. See also Uni-e-s contre l’immigration jetable collective archives at: <http://www.contreimmigrationjetable.org/>

³³³ See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oP8_P8X0bLc&feature=related and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1l6ilz5p0c&feature=related>

resistance, still searching for its own political legitimacy in its expression. Therefore, these two forms could be schematically related to the two categories of resistance discourses, constituting two power networks enunciated above: on the one hand, *legitimised resistance* (networks established, or semi-established as a legitimate form of resistance discourse); and on the other hand, *non-legitimised resistance* (networks of resistance seeking to establish legitimacy of their discourse). A third discourse, *not declared as political*, was also identified. In that sense, while all three resulting discourses do feature an inherently ‘social’ form (in the sense of social movement) achieved through the cultural practice itself, the legitimised resistance will tend to assume a more political form.

To understand how those three discourses are related to activism in musical practice, it could be useful to qualify schematically the relation our case studies entertain with different militant groups. To draw our typology, we could draw inspiration from the classification of the different forms of contemporary militancy proposed by Agrikoliansky, Fillieule and Mayer in their study of *altermondialisme* and recent reconfigurations of political activism in France.³³⁴ They distinguish different political traditions and trends, four of which can be applied to our study: *extrême gauche* and radical left political parties; trade unions established before 1995 (such as CGT, FO CFDT);³³⁵ *Sans* and *alter* movements coming out of the radical fringes of third-worldism and internationalist currents emerging in the 1980s; anarchist and autonomous political movements.³³⁶ While the latter two categories are significant platforms of loose social identification for postcolonial communities, a fifth, final category of ‘grassroots cultural communities’ (featuring formal and informal local associative networks) may be added to undertake a typology.

Recap table: typology of activist engagement for our case studies

The following table (*Fig. 5*) is an attempt to summarise schematically the link the different cases of musical resistance encountered in investigation entertain with activist networks, incorporating the different parameters proposed throughout the topographic chapter (Chapter III).

³³⁴ See Agrikoliansky, Fillieule & Mayer eds. (2005), *op. cit.*

³³⁵ For more information in the evolution of syndicalism, see Mouriaux, René (2008) *Le Syndicalisme en France depuis 1945* (Paris: La Découverte).

³³⁶ The authors also evoke the intellectual militant networks (such as those articulated around *Le Monde Diplomatique*), alternative media networks, and the Christian sources of farmers movements, and the radicalisation of farmers movements through the Larzac experiment of the 1970s, which most famous emanation remains José Bové’s Confédération Paysanne. Agrikoliansky, Fillieule & Mayer eds. (2005), *op. cit.*

Figure 5. Social or political engagement in musical practice

Typology of the relation between musical affinity and militant affinity identified for the selected artists

Tendency of engagement. 'political' or 'social' (according to specific definitions provided)		POLITICAL ↔ SOCIAL				
Favoured / major militant affinity. according to political legitimacy of discourse →		LEGITIMISED DISCOURSE: (Semi-)established as legitimate, political resistance		NON-LEGITIMISED DISCOURSE: Overtly seeking to establish political legitimacy/recognition		NON-DECLARED DISCOURSE: Not necessarily asserting political legitimacy
Musical affinity & related case study (see fig.3) ↓		Extrême gauche, radical left parties (PCF, NPA...)	Trade Unions (CGT, FO, CFDT...)	Sans and/or Alter-inspired collectives (Act'Up, CSP, CIP, DAL, ESF, FASTI, SUD, WSF...)	Anarchist and/or autonomous movements (MIR, MIB, FSQP; FA, CNT, squats)	Grassroots social communities (associations, loose cultural networks)
1. Popular theatre	JM	√	√	√		√
2. World Music	MR			√		√
	TB			√	√	√
	VK					√
3. Musiques amplifiées	KA			√	√	√
	LR				√	√
	MAP	√		√	√	√
	MHOC	√		√	√	√
	OPA			√	√	√
	ST			√	√	√

A political legitimization along discursive lines?

All in all, in the overall instances of cultural resistance observed, a tendency to establish discourse as the touchstone of political legitimization is clearly tangible. Cultural resistance hence develops around two poles, or spheres: discursive vs. performative. In the first sphere, centred on discourse, injustices are usually verbalised through vocal denunciations, which tends to offer a factor of social recognition and political legitimization, since discourse is easily identifiable as a common element to both militant and artistic practice. The case studies perceived as such will often be received as generating a legitimate, or clearly political commitment in their musical practice (arguably, reproducing symbolic domination of discourse). The second sphere tends to obey a performative logic, less easy to read than that of discourse, hence not as easy to construe in terms of political legitimization: injustices are experienced, and often denounced through alternative enactments, for instance, the quest for different social spaces and cultural interactions, and thereby the assertion of collective dignity.

The creation of Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue, the associative network hosting and organising Moleque de Rua and Voukoum when they are touring on metropolitan France seems to illustrate that point quite well. Self-declared as '*projet international de proximité*', the creation of Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue in 1996 derives from the encounter of Duda, lead figure of Moleque de Rua, and Jacques Pasquier, third-worldist militant, active in DAL and *sans* struggles at an Earth summit in Rio in 1992.³³⁷ Politically, what they had in common was this tension between a disgust or rejection of the legitimate symbolic channels for expressing political discontents, along with a consistent aspiration to building social alternatives. Viewing art as a vehicle of social transformation – although Moleque themselves have acknowledged in informal interview that reaching out to the targeted audience is still difficult – the association, based in France, was created as a structure 'dedicated to promoting the recognition of popular culture', providing material and human resources for cultural movements, associations, emerging artists for exchanges and international projects, in France, Brazil, or elsewhere in the world,³³⁸ in order to 'fight against cultural exclusion', hence tackle social discriminations more generally.³³⁹ '[I]ndispensable tool for local government agencies and independent cultural associations',³⁴⁰ Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue

³³⁷ In *Bilan 1999*, internal archives collected at Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue's main base in Le Mans in 2006-2007.

³³⁸ The associative network has since its inception developed cultural projects in locations as varied as Mali, Senegal, Brazil, Cuba, Romania, DOM-TOM territories, or India.

³³⁹ See description of Les Gamins on Moleque website: <http://www.myspace.com/molequederua>

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

was conceived as a bridging device between the excluded and the governing powers, wherein cultural practice was construed as a vehicle of social integration.

Initiated in that period, the concept of *atelier-résidence* is described by the association as a privileged form of cultural exchange at grassroots level:

Nous organisons ces échanges sous forme d'« **ateliers-résidences** » qui consistent en la mise en résidence d'un groupe artistique ou culturel, issu d'une autre culture, pendant une période suffisamment longue pour susciter **une succession d'initiatives débouchant sur un événement important**, et ce à partir d'une intervention simultanée sur plusieurs quartiers d'une même agglomération.

2.1.1. Cette méthodologie a été expérimentée et mise au point avec des groupes d'Amérique latine, des Caraïbes, d'Afrique, mais aussi d'Europe. Les groupes, de quinze à trente personnes, sont composés d'artistes, d'animateurs de projets, ou tout simplement de personnes porteuses d'émergences artistiques, militant dans un mouvement politico-culturel ou investies dans un projet culturel de quartier. Nous nous installons pendant au minimum une quinzaine de jours dans la ville choisie et mettons en place des ateliers dont le travail dans les différents quartiers est concrétisé par l'organisation d'un événement artistique. Durant le séjour, un certain nombre de repas de quartiers sont organisés à partir d'ateliers de cuisine, animés par des membres des groupes invités. Ceux-ci, disséminés dans plusieurs quartiers, peuvent aborder **plusieurs disciplines artistiques** (musique, construction de percussions à partir d'éléments de récupération, danse, théâtre, arts plastiques, cirque, masques, costumes, chars et décorations pour la préparation d'un carnaval, etc.).

2.1.2. L'atelier-résidence se place ainsi au centre d'un espace triangulaire dessiné par les trois pôles de la rue, de l'atelier et de la scène.

2.1.3. Techniquement, ces rencontres s'articulent autour de **trois formes principales**:

Les animations d'ateliers ou de stages

Les « arbres à palabres » ou repas de quartier et autres apéros-concerts

Les spectacles et œuvres collectives.³⁴¹

It could be argued that the militant politics underlying the concept of residence-workshop obeys a performative much more than a discursive logic: the alternative social spaces and cultural practice is asserted *de facto* collectively, much more than it is an analytical critique of a system. Naturally, both trends – performative and discursive – have their strengths and shortcomings, and although not mutually exclusive, those two poles articulate the instances of cultural resistance observed in the musical practice of our bands. The next set of chapters will offer a closer insight into this dynamic. Undertaking a more thorough examination of the politicisation of musical practice, we shall come to understand that the two poles articulating resistance are also reflected in the modes of musical practice itself, moving and developing between a festive form and a discursive structure.

³⁴¹ *Note d'intention 2006*, internal archives collected at Les Gamins' main base in Le Mans in 2006-2007.

2. The return of the repressed: musical expression as symbolic counter-violence

2.1 The return of the postcolonial repressed: reversal of the stigma, dialectics of empowerment

Denial of expression vs. subversion of expression: reversal of the stigma as resistance

Compiling one year of workshops in school and community centres context (MJC), KMK produced in 2005 the CD *Délit d'Xpression*.³⁴² The overall project was designed to posit musical expression as subversive. The trope of *délit* is one of the numerous negative clichés associated with *banlieue* youth – especially postcolonial youth. Initially imposed from the outside as *stigma*, the trope of *délit* becomes reclaimed as a source of empowerment in a discursive gesture of *reversal of the stigma*. For the Toulouse *banlieue* youth participating, this very commonplace assertion of freedom of expression seemed to at once generate and reflect a dynamic of resistance against the stigmatization of their daily lives and, essentially, the denial of their identities. In other words, through musical expression, KMK aimed to consciously transform *déni* (denial) into *délit* (offence): a commonplace strategy in hip hop culture, the assertion of freedom of expression here becomes not only one of the first and most fundamental claims, but also an essential tool to refuse denial by disarming negative distortions.

The concept of *reversal of the stigma* developed by Goffman in the 1960s may be useful here to understand the mechanics at stake in this expression of cultural resistance. Standing as a clear coming to terms with the social awareness of stigma, the method employed by the strategy of reversal of the stigma consists essentially in *subverting* the negative perception into a positive one by refusing both the required social denial and the ensuing self-depreciation resulting from the structural, imposed perception of social inferiority of the stigmatized self. As the definition of subversion suggests – ‘to turn from beneath; to overthrow or undermine the powers or influence of an authority’ (*OED*), this process of ‘turning from beneath’ passive subjection into active empowerment may be interpreted as a form of politicisation of symbolic domination – the scope of which shall be further discussed below.

³⁴² MJC: Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture, equivalent of community centres.

The return of the postcolonial repressed: dialectics of empowerment

The social discourses and artistic expressions found in the fieldwork reveal that subversion plays the essential function of triggering a reversal of the stigma, often via the rhetorical mainspring of *détournement* (i.e., diverting, re-routing, re-directing; appropriation for one's own benefit). In that sense, in the example initially presented of KMK's compilation entitled *Délit d'Xpression*, the stigmatized self of *déni* is subverted by the playful rhetorical device of paronymy with *délit*, hence reversing the expected passively experienced stigma into a more active cultural identity via artistic expression. The function of subversion here lays the foundations for formulating a cultural identity of resistance via an appropriation of hip hop sub-culture, wherein cultural (and in this case, artistic) expression is portrayed as a form of emancipation, and the assertion of freedom of expression itself as a form of resistance. Just as Goffman identified the stigmatized self as 'not quite human', the purpose of resistance is to '*redevenir humain*', as Keny Arkana underlines.³⁴³ Similarly, Hamé (of La Rumeur) explained the claim to freedom of expression as a struggle against ruthless collective denial, defining cultural expression as '*un des derniers remparts à la déshumanisation*'.³⁴⁴ This also calls to mind Memmi and Fanon's analyses mentioned above of the colonized as essentially dehumanized. Politicization finds its primary justification in this struggle for emancipation from a system structurally dehumanizing the oppressed – particularly the postcolonial generation in the case of France.

Dékatman Mas: dance and music as release and sublimation

Amidst all our selected acts, Voukoum and its *déboulés* is a particularly striking instance of the form of revolt of *release through dance* (and music) mentioned by Fanon. The *Déboulé La Répression* is the most obvious example of the denunciation of slavery, part of the historical legacy of Guadeloupe. This street parade was created in 2001 to mark the 199th anniversary of the collective suicide, in 1802, of the general Louis Delgrès and his 300 soldiers as a refusal to become slaves again. The *déboulé* stages different past and present figures of institutional repression – police, judges, prefects, bishops, etc.³⁴⁵ The history of this *refusal* of colonial submission is an essential feature of Voukoum. It forms part and parcel of this cultural process of *resistance*, and may be argued to be highly political because

³⁴³ Keny Arkana, 'Les chemins du retour', in *Désobéissance* (2008).

³⁴⁴ Interview with Mohamed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé), Paris, 18th June 2006. See Appendix 6.

³⁴⁵ See the different *déboulé* programmes over the years. For instance, the 20 years of Voukoum programme available at <http://www.potomitan.info/gwadeloup/voukoum2008.php>; or the latest two editions retrieved at: <http://www.potomitan.info/gwadeloup/voukoum2010.php>; <http://www.potomitan.info/gwadeloup/voukoum2011.php>

rooted in the history of colonial exploitation. Staging the different aspects of past and present oppression of the *creole* postcolonial subject of Guadeloupe, the street parades organised by Voukoum perform a form of symbolic resistance to the political and cultural hegemony of the ex-colonial and still white, metropolitan power. In psychoanalytical terms, a form of *release* (*défoulement*), as described by Sartre above who writes about literal, physical release informs a lot of the cultural productions of the collective.³⁴⁶ The *Konvwa Chaltoune* (torchlight processions), and *Veye Kiltirel* (cultural evening gatherings) feature elements of trance in the dance, and the *Mofwaze* used during the *déboulés* reclaims the African mask tradition of *embodying* a spirit, akin to the notion of *possession*. Trance provides a platform merging immanently *release* (*défoulement*) of (post)colonial domination and *sublimation* of it.

2.2 The reversal of symbolic violence: symbolic counter-violence as resistance

Arguably, the process of violence at stake in cultural resistance could also be reformulated in Bourdieusian terms as a formalised, radical expression of symbolic revolt against symbolic or non-symbolic violence exerted by dominant powers.

Reversing violent subjugation

In truth, the practice of symbolic violence in culture might be considered a concealed, symbolic form of domination of the ruling class through institutions, hence a necessarily *political* form of domination. In that case, a dialectical analysis of cultural practices may regard cultural resistance as a form of conscious symbolic violence (or *reversal of symbolic violence*) performed with the deliberate critical intention to resist the symbolic violence of cultural domination, and appropriate or re-appropriate symbolic power through protest culture, or counterculture. In other words, cultural resistance and the process of radicalisation of protest culture can be interpreted as a form of symbolic counter-violence that fights back against symbolic violence in an attempt to make a political stake out of the appropriation of symbolic power, i.e., discourse, representations, particularly visible in artistic practices and aesthetic forms. Thus, musical expression emerges not merely as a return of the repressed against violence perpetrated – and again, as in the case of denial, not necessarily recognised as such and often naturalised or internalized,³⁴⁷ but also as the establishment of a symbolic

³⁴⁶ See Chapter I above, wherein Sartre's preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* is quoted to stress the 'painfully contracted muscles'. Fanon (1963), *ibid.*, p 19.

³⁴⁷ See Bourdieu, P. (1993), *Sociology in Question* (London: Sage).

power relation, vital to social appropriation and any form of individual or collective empowerment. The biographical elements underlying the artistic genealogy of Keny Arkana provide a good example of this process.

Confronted by economic, social, physical and psychological violence from a very young age, Keny Arkana reclaimed hip hop practice from her early beginnings in 1996 as a form of resistance to this violence and an expression of a determined refusal of its consequences. In the context of foster care homes, rap became a cathartic weapon against confinement. The frequently mentioned expression '*violence du système*' is a theme abundantly referred to by the artist in her songs,³⁴⁸ often summarised by the arguably Manichean use of the term *Babylon*, borrowed from the Rastafarian tradition to denote Western society and its 'system' of oppressive political, social, and economic power structure.³⁴⁹ If economic domination, political and social oppression are unambiguously denounced, what Keny Arkana also insists on in her songs is the resulting alienation of individuals as a psychological consequence of coercion on people who mentally internalize it in a destructive cycle, deriving from her and her peers' experience which she observed during her years spent in foster care homes. She highlights for instance the vicious circle of repression in foster care homes, facilitated by the enforcement of the '*camisole chimique*' ('chemical straightjacket') method with its tragic consequences on the youth in terms of drug addiction.³⁵⁰ For the artist, contrary to Voukoum for instance, the *release* and *sublimation* processes at stake in artistic production are construed first and foremost as an individual experience, which will then lead towards a more collective experience via identification. This in turn could be a step towards the politicisation of cultural practice and expression.

The traumatising experience of institutionalised repression and confinement of very young people have endowed the artist with an original engagement with politics, wherein the conception of protest is '*inséparable de l'introspection*' and emancipation always springs from a refusal experienced primarily on an intimate and individual basis before it connects to

³⁴⁸ Particularly on the album *Entre ciment et belle étoile* (2006). See 'Entre les mots: enfants de la terre', 'Entre les mots: du local au global'. This expression is also acknowledged as a trigger for her revolt by Keny Arkana in a number of interviews (in KA informal interview, press review and *webreview* documents).

³⁴⁹ *Babylon* as a figure of oppression is consistently mentioned by the artist on her albums. On *L'esquisse* (2005), see 'Le missile est lancé', 'Ca nous correspond pas', 'J'ai besoin d'air', and 'Dur d'être optimiste'. On *Entre ciment et belle étoile* (2006), see 'Le missile suit sa lancée', 'La rage', 'Jeunesse du monde', and 'Ils ont peur de la liberté'. On *Désobéissance* (2008), see 'Réveillez-vous', 'La rue nous appartient', 'Les chemins du retour', and 'Cinquième soleil'.

³⁵⁰ mentioned in 'Hé connard' or 'Le fardeau' (*Entre ciment et belle étoile*, 2006).

more elaborate forms of collective action.³⁵¹ This intimate, personal aspect of the experience of oppression also explains the homology of the discursive registers held by the artist, whatever public performing situation she finds herself in – artistic intervention, political action, or more biographically oriented discussions (such as informal interviews).

Resistance: the return of the postcolonial repressed at collective level

In addition the creation of a new symbolic space – the hybrid, nomadic collective platform of *Appel Aux sans Voix* aiming at the subversion, merging, or reformulation of discourses and representations – can be posited as an inherent form of resistance to the symbolic violence of dominant ideology. But this does not apply merely to Keny Arkana: this form of hybrid (i.e., not overtly, purely political) resistance seems to be found particularly in the assertion of a political postcolonial identity. Emerging as a return of the postcolonial repressed, its quest for social dignity and its ‘politics of recognition’ stance can be construed as resistance against the perpetration of colonial domination at a symbolic level. The defenders of this political postcolonial identity seek to build a force against the reconfiguration of this colonial domination in mainstream political, social, and media discourses in contemporary France through postcolonial symbolic domination – with postcolonial identity being so misrecognized and delegitimized the term *postcolonial* itself is very rarely acknowledged outside militant, intellectual, and specialist circles.³⁵²

To return to Fanon, when considered from the psychoanalytical perspective, both dance (art) and politics (*révolte conscientisée*) can be construed as strategies of resistance emerging from, and ultimately merging into, a form of *release* and *sublimation* of repression. Yet, while dance offers an immanent expression of release AND sublimation appearing both simultaneously, conscious revolt, because of its greater reliance on language, implies an ordered sequence of release THEN sublimation not as automatic in performing art. In the end, the mechanism of *release* and *sublimation* enables the emergence of a dialectic of empowerment, namely the assertion of vital power relations expressed in performance (dance and music) and conscious revolt (politics). In those two areas, the postcolonial repressed returns to formulate symbolic empowerment, namely appropriate symbolic power and express symbolic counter-violence as a form of resistance to symbolic domination.

³⁵¹ See <http://www.keny-arkana.com/divers/bio1.php> This vision is summarised by the phrase ‘*changer le monde commence par se changer soi-même*’, repeated as a finishing punchline in the song ‘Entre les lignes: clouée au sol’ (*Entre ciment et belle étoile*, 2006).

³⁵² See Khiari, Sadri (2006), *Pour une politique de la racaille* (Paris: Textuel) ; Boubeker, Ahmed & Hajjat, Abdellali ed. (2008), *Histoire politique des immigrations (post)coloniales ; France 1920-2008* (Paris: Editions Amsterdam), esp. pp 233-272.

Postcolonial communities are social groups particularly denied in contemporary France: more often than not, grassroots cultural expressions flourish in these communities to struggle against this denial by dominant discourse and produce collective dialogues on the postcolonial condition. These expressions may be read as a form of *return of the repressed* through a re-appropriation of symbolic power, or to quote Hamé, as a collective ‘*démarche [consistant à] investir le champ artistique et symbolique comme réceptacle des frustrations, des violences, dénouer à travers le canal symbolique [...] physiquement, moralement vers une espèce de performance, d’émulation, une sorte de dépassement de soi, transposé sur le plan artistique*’.³⁵³ Inherent to any system of domination wherein struggle for the appropriation of symbolic power is exerted at the expense of consciousness and symbolically repressed through the misrecognition of domination, the Bourdieusian conception of symbolic violence is ultimately articulated as a form of political domination. In that respect, radical cultural expression and political uprising can be seen as part and parcel of the same process of *resistance*.

2.3 The politics of symbolic resistance: cultural survival, collective spaces

Akin to Hakim Bey’s TAZ,³⁵⁴ processes of symbolic counter-violence (Bourdieu), reversal of stigma (Goffman) or strategies of revolt via *consciousness* and *artistic performance* (Fanon) could be argued to produce an ideological *crack*,³⁵⁵ producing a space, wherein new language, meanings, and ideological configurations can be envisaged for people to re-appropriate their lives. However this dynamic does not develop in the abstract, but is rooted on the very material terms of the emerging countercultural space. The cases of Voukoum and Keny Arkana may provide a comparative analysis of this dynamic.

Voukoum: cultural resistance as a space of collective survival

If Voukoum matches Fanon’s typology of the strategies of revolt for the colonized – art (*performing revolt*) and politics (*conscious revolt*) – particularly well, the potential for revolutionary politics remains ambiguous and hybrid. While there have been theoretical debates over which strategy holds the most revolutionary potential – a transcendent vision of art being generally opposed to an adequation of conscious revolt as politics, both entailing the danger of essentialisation and reification of both processes – in practice, cultural

³⁵³ Interview with Mohamed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé), Paris, 18th June 2006. See Appendix 6.

³⁵⁴ See Bey (1985), *op. cit.*

³⁵⁵ To follow the extended metaphor structuring John Holloway’s latest account of anticapitalist resistance. See Holloway (2010), *op. cit.*

resistance seems like both a stepping stone into politics and a refuge from it. The case of the historical emergence of Voukoun in Guadeloupe illustrates this ambiguity rather clearly.

The *Mouvman Kiltirel Gwadeloup* emerges directly in the backdrop of the collapse of liberation struggles. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the inception of decolonization also affected Guadeloupe, taking the shape of independence movements, mostly active in student organisations. Gradually progressing throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the movement found a political structure in the GONG (Groupement d'Organisations Nationalistes de la Guadeloupe). Following the lethal repression of the 1967 uprising,³⁵⁶ nationalist activity was redeployed, spreading to the trade union sector. Founded in 1970 by militants who turned away from the GONG, the UTA (Union des Travailleurs Agricoles), an autonomous trade union, drew its inspiration from the Nationalist Liberation Front of Vietnam, and although not Maoist *per se*, reclaimed similarities with the Chinese communist model for its idea of a revolution emerging from a peasant milieu, resorting to the same penetration method. The nationalist or independentist movement of the 1970s, born out of this *syndicalisme de rupture*, putting forward the idea of economic independence and autonomy of political decision, reached a political climax in 1978 when this social trend translated into the creation of an independentist party. Drawing from colonial liberation struggles, the UPLG (Union Pour la Libération de la Guadeloupe) featured a small armed fraction and mostly active in the early 1980s.³⁵⁷ With Mitterrand's accession to power and following the *tournant de la rigueur* after 1983, the movement lost momentum. Decentralisation and devolution policies, rocketing unemployment and the ensuing development of social benefits, were all crucial factors in contributing to nipping nationalist claims in the bud, to the extent that in 1990, the UPLG officially renounces all ambitions of independence. From that point, political nationalism initiated a clear retreat into cultural practice, trading political struggle for radical claims of cultural identity and progressively shifting into a cultural form of nationalist struggle. If the Pointre-à-Pitre based collective Akiyo, set up in 1978, inspired Voukoun a great deal for their notion of *combat culturel*, Voukoun was the first emanation of this cultural transformation of nationalism in Basse-Terre. Voukoun remains a hybrid expression of resistance insofar as the cultural dynamic, directly anchored in the history of liberation struggles, may appear as a conscious revolt by

³⁵⁶ Following an incident of racist violence, the strike that turned into three days of riots on 25, 26, 27 May 1967 was heavily repressed in blood. If the official figures mention seven killed, the unofficial estimated total approaches 85 victims.

³⁵⁷ At the climax of activity in the early 1980s, the UPLG was criticised by less radical views for being a violent group 'resorting to macoutist practices' – implying violence against governing powers, institutional terrorism, and corruption.

default, although this strategy is reclaimed as an *active*, chosen, *conscious* strategy rather than a default mechanism to create a space of cultural and psychosocial survival. Nevertheless, at a collective level, the creation of a space of survival is always the primary response to cultural denial, postcolonial repression, and the economic violence perpetrated by the neo-colonial treatment of Creole inhabitants of Bas-du-Bourg. Reclaimed consciously as a form of revolt, for some, the case of Voukoum can be interpreted as a form of authentic grassroots revolutionary political praxis, inscribed in the so-called ‘third-worldist’ tradition, namely, emerging from the terrain of a local postcolonial community and the fabric of their daily lives.

La rage du peuple: the creation of new symbolic spaces

Particularly true of symbolic power instances with a collective basis, such as setting up a band (Keny Arkana), an *altermondialiste* network (La Rage Du Peuple), or a militant dynamic (Appel Aux Sans Voix), the creation of new symbolic spaces provides on the material plane a new place or form around which to build new networks, reorganising communities according to the degree of identification with the resistance process. In that respect, for Keny Arkana, live performances are all opportunities of public *prise de parole*, and as a gesture of integrity, the same words and expressions are used in all contexts of enunciation: song lyrics, political speeches, and interviews and on numerous occasions, the artist will respond to political events through songs. The song ‘La rage du peuple’ for instance can be viewed as a political manifesto of her *altermondialiste* group. Universalising her own personal experience as an emblem of oppression aiming at wider identification in her songs to return to the roots of her *rage* – a constructive form of revolt according to the artist – Keny Arkana defines herself, again, in one of her songs as ‘*pas une rappeuse mais une contestataire qui fait du rap*’.³⁵⁸ The collective symbolic instances created relay structures for identification with a process of resistance (or *rage* dynamic) against the status quo and *la violence du système*, which could already be construed in itself as a political gesture.

All in all, those mentioned instances of musical practice in postcolonial communities (KMK, LR, KA, VK) suggest that through the notion of cultural resistance, the question of *politics* itself may underlie radical cultural expression, insofar as it is placed on the symbolic plane. Cultural expression against dominant cultural discourse necessarily implies a power

³⁵⁸ In ‘Le missile suit sa lancée’ (*Entre ciment et belle étoile*, 2006).

struggle for cultural appropriation. As a form of cultural *resistance*, counterculture sets the issue of political action at the core of the process of cultural appropriation. Particularly true in the case of French postcolonial communities, often totally repressed, or partially excluded from the symbolic realm of political representation, culture may be resorted to in a subversive fashion as a necessary form of collective expression of revolt against political exclusion – denial being one of the strongest forms of symbolic repression.³⁵⁹ In the end, the resurgence of the social context and anti-colonial paradigm may be seen as crucial elements of radicalisation and provide a stronger connection to political action. Yet is cultural resistance a complement or trigger of political action? The notion of *cultural resistance* itself thus emerges as a particularly relevant conceptual tool to assess the political scope of resistance in the light of empirical observation.

³⁵⁹ Abstraction/isolation, separation/segregation, discrimination, and decontextualisation are all considered by Bourdieu as typical instances of symbolic violence. See Terray (1996), *op. cit.*, pp 16-17.

3. The political scope of cultural resistance

To assess the political scope of the cultural productions delivered by the case studies, we can return to Duncombe's three typologies of cultural resistance (see Chapter II) revolving around three notions:

- (i) the different interpretations of the link between cultural resistance and political action;
- (ii) the means cultural resistance can use to convey a political message;
- and
- (iii) the scales of cultural resistance.

3.1 *Culture as politics?*

Confronting theoretical trends to the heterogeneity of empirical realities

Starting with the first notion, i.e. the relation between cultural resistance and political action, Duncombe provides a *relational* paradigm to define cultural resistance: in other words, the definition and contents of cultural resistance depend on its relation to political action. Duncombe proposes four interpretive trends to assess the relation between cultural resistance and radical politics, ranging from optimistic to defeatist interpretations, namely:

- (i) culture as a stepping stone into politics;
- (ii) culture as a political act in itself (as both are equally symbolic discourse);
- (iii) culture as escape from politics; and
- (iv) culture as detrimental to radical political change (for culture is always already co-opted or incorporated into a dominant discourse).³⁶⁰

Yet in practice, empirical observation reveals that the reality of cultural practice is not so clear-cut. The case of Moleque de Rua may illustrate the heterogeneity and complexity of interpretive stakes.

Créer c'est résister: ambivalence and heterogeneity in the empirical relation

Decisively committed to the creation of social alternatives to delinquency for the street youth of São Paulo and for socially ill-inserted communities, Moleque de Rua have had loose affinities to global social movements and the World Social Forum (WSF). If their lyrics are not always directly political, the collective can be deemed to have affinities to political resistance on three fronts: the rotating organisation of this registered association, stressing the *collective* and community aspect of the process; the socio-economic

³⁶⁰ See Duncombe (2002), *op. cit.*

background of its individual members, wherein the logic of financial autonomy underlies the dynamic of the band, seen as a form of financial self-help out of the favela; and thirdly, in the alternative way of organising their cultural practice. In fact, Moleque de Rua's slogan summarises this: *créer, c'est résister*. Similarly, the discursive claims (in the lyrics) are considered important, but the logic of resistance lies primarily in the empirical *practice* of the artistic activity, approached with a grassroots, collectivist and equalitarian conception.

However, an underlying contradiction remains: although Moleque de Rua are very invested in socio-cultural animation (SCA) with intense participation in residence workshops, it was observed that throughout their practice, there is a general sense prevailing that artistic requirements – quite demanding at that – should always *precede* social expectations, in order not to fall into some form of local *charity business*, or as a sheer political alibi (*caution*) instrumentalised by the misery-focused (*misérabiliste*) social policies promoted locally by the state in the development of socio-cultural animation (SCA). Overall, artistic research and cultural practice are valued as most important, not only as a source for restoring self-esteem in the oppressed, but also as a form of transcendence of one's own social condition.

In that sense, their artistic practice could be conceived either as a political act in itself or an escape from politics. As artistic expression and representation are amongst the most common devices to provide at once a formulation, a detachment, and a reflection of the band's own lives and social condition, it can also be viewed as a first step, or *stepping stone* into politics. Yet paradoxically enough, because of their overall rather hostile attitude towards organised politics, their cultural production could equally be interpreted as an escape from politics or impediment to radical political change. Thus in the end any of the four interpretive trends – at times contradictory – suggested by Duncombe may be used and combined there. In fact, the case of Moleque de Rua shows how the politicisation of cultural practice is rather an implied phenomenon, surfacing out of the dire social context of the favela, and more generally out of the political backdrop of the corruption of political parties. All in all, if the band has a distant and circumspect relation to activism, it could be argued that almost naturally, the empirical experience and confrontation with one's own social condition informs the potentially political aspect of the artistic practice. If the band has sympathies for anti-racist associations and initiatives against discrimination and social exclusion, their political position may be essentially interpreted as stemming not from claims considered political *per se*, but rather, radical stances emerging from their original social background, as is also the case for the collective Voukoum. In that sense, they differ in their

approach from other case studies where the political claims, whether initially chosen or not, are much less ambiguous in their potential interpretation insofar as they are clearly ideologically assumed as political positions (such as Jolie Môme or MAP).

Merging the four interpretive trends into a praxis of radical collective expression

Thus, as far as the four interpretive trends to articulate cultural activity and political resistance are concerned, it is interesting to note that, as the case of Moleque de Rua illustrates, most of our case studies do not fit quite neatly into any of those categories. In truth, their *praxis* of cultural resistance is strongly related to political activism, each case study for one specific reason and in a specific manner. It should nonetheless be noted that regarding the second interpretation – i.e., (ii) culture as political act – when asked, in formal interview or informal discussion, whether they considered their cultural practice a political act in itself, all artists interviewed replied that this was altogether a misconception of culture and/or of political activism. This question even raised at times a conflicting reaction of revolt on behalf of some members of the networks surrounding the case studies. For instance, when asked by potential participants whether she was going to perform at the *Appel Aux Sans Voix* forum in Villeurbanne, Keny Arkana replied ‘*non, c’est pas de la musique là frère, c’est sérieux, c’est politique*’, stressing the different purpose, and context of enunciation of the same message of revolt.³⁶¹ Similarly, other interviewees sometimes suggested that seeing cultural production as a political act in itself was either an immodest statement or an erroneous conception of the role of musical practices:

Après les différences, c’est que tu travailles sur d’autres terrains: c’est d’autres rythmes [...], c’est des contextes, des ressorts intellectuels différents. Quand j’écris un texte de rap, je pense à l’image, je pense au souffle du mot, de la métaphore, quand j’écris un texte militant, je m’interdis de penser à la métaphore, [...] ma personnalité s’efface.³⁶²

On the whole, if none denied the existence of cultural resistance, for the most part, the musicians interviewed self-situated their practice as *simultaneously* a stepping stone into political activity and an escape from politics through the production of symbolic expression. This simultaneity lies precisely at the heart of the dynamic of appropriation, the contradictions setting in motion a dialectical quest. In the end, Mouss (of Mouss & Hakim) could overcome this contradiction through the notion of *solidarité* underlying a ‘politics of dignity’, producing a symbolic expression born out of an indignation at injustice and domination going beyond a mere ‘politics of recognition’: ‘*la dimension militante est*

³⁶¹ Notes from fieldwork journal, self-generated resource, 2006-2008.

³⁶² Interview with Mohamed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé), Paris, 18th June 2006. See Appendix 6.

inhérente à notre pratique, car on part d'un besoin de justice. [...] Le vecteur culturel est une arme adaptée à notre combat dans le langage, pour se donner les moyens d'expression et d'appropriation d'une dignité collective'.³⁶³

3.2 The locus of radical political expression: the relational character of cultural resistance

After looking at the *nature* of the relation between cultural resistance and political action, Duncombe's second typology focuses on the *means*, or mainsprings of this relation. Looking at *how culture conveys its politics*, it is the most crucial pivot in articulating cultural resistance with political action, and shall hence be analysed more closely and thoroughly for its own sake. Although the data observed empirically was always plural and heterogenous, specific elements or trends within the artistic form itself were developed to a variable degree in most collectives. Those specific elements could be essentially summed up around a split between two main trends: a focus on the discursive form, and a focus on the festive aspect of expression. An abstract, decontextualised attempt to correlate those two main trends observed empirically in cultural resistance with Duncombe's second typology of the means to convey a political message mentioned above would probably classify festive resistance as category (iv) *cultural activity*. It would also probably consider (i) *contents* and (iii) *interpretation* more likely to be understood as a form of discursive resistance, while (ii) *transmission* would be in both tendencies. But of course, empirical realities have again proved that in practice, those four categories are often contained together in cultural expression.³⁶⁴

(i) Political contents: explicit lyrics

In terms of *contents*, many of our artists have explicitly political lyrics. While a more thorough analysis of lyrics shall be undertaken below, we could nonetheless illustrate this point by sketching how La Rumeur and Mouss & Hakim have reacted to the 2005 revolts or more globally, to the general context surrounding the uprising and the ensuing political radicalisation with Sarkozy's term of office in 2007.

In a song entitled 'Qui ça étonne encore?', La Rumeur assert the legitimacy of autonomous organisation of self-defense ('*On n'a pas rendu l'âme, ni les armes*'). The

³⁶³ Interview with Mustapha Amokrane (a.k.a. Mouss), Toulouse, 18th October 2007.

³⁶⁴ See Duncombe (2002), *op. cit.* and further account in Chapter II ; see also Chapter V for more detailed discussion of the two different forms of resistance.

corrosive lyrics of the band explicitly read the institutional stigmatization, the racist treatment of postcolonial communities (*‘Qui veut nous foutre dehors?’*), and the racist police crimes as the main triggers of the uprising:

C’est ni l’pied ni la gloire quand tout crame
C’est même pas une réponse à la hauteur du drame
Mais c’est comme ça c’est tout, c’est tout c’est qui reste
Quand l’quartier fait même peur a la peste
Ma vie mon cœur ne flanche pas
Mon père ma mère ne pleurez pas
Si on se jette dehors avec le diable au corps
C’est qu’on refuse de vivre sans honorer nos morts.³⁶⁵

Mouss & Hakim inscribe their denunciation in a more colonial history approach. Written in both Berber and French (a linguistic disposition specific to the postcolonial migrant’s condition) the song called ‘La carte de résidence’ (the residence permit), released in 2007, is a cover from the Algerian Berber artist Slimane Azem written in 1965.³⁶⁶ This bilingual composition comes across as a linguistic disposition, or identity typical, and specific to the postcolonial migrant’s condition – in this case of Algerian origin. The song tackles the issue of state control of migrant workers and may be seen as a reference to the harshening of state measures enforced against illegal immigrants living in France under Sarkozy’s presidency, notably through the creation of a Ministry of Immigration, Integration, and National Identity dedicated to deportations of migrants – coming overwhelmingly from ex-colonial African countries.

D’après ce qu’on nous annonce ça va dans un bon sens
Faut pas prévoir à l’avance avant d’avoir la réponse
Avant d’avoir la réponse au sujet d’la résidence
Khis ruh ken hen imenik ye la warlom di tmurt ik
Ad lumud at ik seltik kulass d’les conférences
Kulass d’les conférences pour étudier tous les sens
C’est vraiment bien dommage le racisme et le chômage
Heureusement qu’il y a des sages, c’est le prestige de la France
C’est le prestige de la France, c’est la raison d’espérance
Anda yi la l’kheldema i waren, d’immigré tti t’kavalen
Yarna soussoum arkhissen, u qarness ‘tu as d’la chance’
U qarness ‘tu as d’la chance’ mi te trit la résidence
Toujours des conversations, le chômage, l’immigration
Et après les élections, on attend qu’on nous annonce
On attend qu’on nous annonce, chaque fois ça recommence
Achral ayaki ne sbar fi tmurt narziz’n em aruh
Ma yi la n’zemer n ruh, ad zran la différence
Ad zran la différence ma yi la ulac la résidence.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ See La Rumeur, ‘Qui ça étonne encore ?’, in *Du cœur à l’outrage* (La Rumeur Records, 2007).

³⁶⁶ See Mouss & Hakim, ‘La carte de résidence’, in *Origines Contrôlées: chansons de l’immigration algérienne* (Atmosphériques, 2007).

³⁶⁷ ‘La carte de résidence’, *op. cit.*

(ii) *Context of musical practice: performance in militant context and DIY culture*

In terms of *form*, most case studies convey a political message through the context of musical performance, which is more often than not articulated to a political activist context. In many instances, live performances are situated in a politically militant context, hinting at an understanding of culture as critical popular culture rather than mass culture. It could be reminded at this stage that the object of study is not the aesthetic form itself (resorting to the various analytical frameworks proposed by musicology), but rather, music as a *cultural practice*. This analytical perspective contends that the main elements subject to politicization are not necessarily in the aesthetic form itself, but rather in the contents of music, along with the conditions and context of musical production. Examples of this trend in the fieldwork are numerous and difficult to count, assess and measure, particularly at specifically intense political moments during the fieldwork (the CPE movement in Spring 2006, and the run up to presidential elections in Spring 2007). To follow on the two previously mentioned case studies, in October 2007 La Rumeur participated in a debate on censorship before performing at the festival *Origines Contrôlées*, a cultural event organised by Mouss & Hakim's cultural associative network *Tactikollectif*, and in June 2007, Mouss & Hakim were headlining at the concert organised during the first Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires set up as a response to the 2005 revolts as an autonomous, political expression of grassroots postcolonial communities. MAP is also exemplary in that respect, more or less systematically connecting their gigs to a militant context.³⁶⁸

But conveying a political message can also be achieved through the medium of transmission itself. The use that collectives such as OPA or Stéréotypes make of the My Space facility endows musical production and transmission with a resolutely DIY aspect which is already sufficient in itself to convey a political message. In addition, OPA always offers their albums on *donations*. Opposed to fixed prices, the collective makes a strong radical political statement against commodification in the way they transmit their music.³⁶⁹

(iii) and (iv) *Reception and activity*

As to the last two categories (*interpretation* and *activity* of cultural production), all artistic collectives studied have a grassroots practice for their cultural activity. From the standpoint of viewing cultural activity as *ipso facto* political, it could be argued that the

³⁶⁸ Here again, an analysis of performance as a political form shall be carried out in more details below. See Chapter V. For more examples, see also Appendix 3: list of the empirical activities undertaken.

³⁶⁹ See more detailed account of OPA's struggle against commodification in Chapter VI.

socio-cultural animation (SCA) dynamic of associative networks (informal or formally registered) as a platform for cultural activity placing musical practice at its core tends to favour a political interpretation of the activity itself, notwithstanding its level of radicality.³⁷⁰

What is more, the grassroots social anchoring of the case studies is in itself an essential factor in endowing the music performed with a political dimension when it is received by the audience. But the audience can equally identify and appropriate a content which was not chiefly intended as political, thereby proceeding to politicization in aesthetic reception. For instance, when they parade in the street as a brass band collective, Tarace Boulba claims a form of symbolic re-appropriation of the social, public space. Yet the radical political expression is not necessarily systematic, and often depends not only on the context, but also on the audience. Hence, the street busking performances Tarace Boulba regularly puts on in the gentrified area of the Bastille on Sundays, or the mobile street parties on specific occasions in Montreuil can all be experienced as radical political statements *per se* by the audience and participants. The appropriation of public space here is not only questioned, but also challenged when the brass band reclaims alternative uses of it along with the reassertion of alternative forms of socialization (*lien social*) via musical practice. Mobile parades can also be construed as representation of a collective, empowering form of social mobility of the grassroots within the public space (the street).

Thus, while all four categories are not mutually exclusive, empirical observation proves there again that our artists create their own approach to the political message, thereby making it difficult to structurally or systematically situate the locus of radical political expression in cultural resistance. It could be important to emphasize here that understanding the dynamics underlying cultural resistance does not imply situating exactly a specific *locus*, but seems to rather mean grasping *specific articulations* between different trends or heterogeneous elements. To put it in linguistic terms, as regards the production of meaning in a given utterance, the syntagmatic axis has primacy over the paradigmatic one, insofar as determining meaning will require giving primary importance to the overall global impression produced rather than focusing on the contents of the different elements each considered separately.³⁷¹ Therefore, it could be argued that the radical political expression in musical

³⁷⁰ As shall be discussed below. See Chapter VII.

³⁷¹ Laclau's analysis of ideology displays a similar tendency to favour articulations, positing the relational character as key to structure the overall production of meaning in a given situation of ideological domination. See Laclau, Ernesto & Mouffe, Chantal (2001), *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics* (London: Verso). See also Introduction for further discussion.

practice lies primarily in its *relational* character, that is, the different sequence of social relations it puts in motion at a given or chosen stage.

3.3 The scales of resistance: the spectrum of political engagement in cultural resistance

Examining the political scale of cultural resistance, the final typology put forward by Duncombe proposes to look at three factors to assess the spectrum of political engagement:

- (i) the level of political *consciousness*, determining political appropriation, ranging from unconscious to self-conscious;
- (ii) the social *outreach* of the cultural form produced, ranging from individual to the whole of society, with sub-cultures and minority cultures as intermediate stages; and
- (iii) the *results* of cultural resistance, ranging from survival (*politics of recognition*) to revolution (radical *politics of redistribution* or the absolute overthrow of a ruling system), with cultural rebellion and political dissent situated between those two ends of the axis.³⁷²

There again, empirical study shows that reality may merge different levels of consciousness; generate a heterogeneous array of social outreach, working on the individual as well as the collective level; and produce a variety of results, all to be assessed on a relative and contextualised scale. The case of the *Appel Aux Sans Voix* (AASV) provides a good example to illustrate the dynamic aspect of political engagement in musical practice.

A political or cultural initiative?

Initiated by La Rage Du Peuple, who organised ‘popular assemblies’ along the Zapatistas model in their neighbourhood of Noailles, the AASV project was a series of itinerant local forums touring around France (or marginally, French-speaking locations in Belgium or Switzerland) throughout the year 2007, and a core organising team appeared as the project took shape, with other autonomous local activists from all over France. Overall, over thirty forums of variable size (ranging usually from forty to a hundred participants) were held in total in more than twenty five cities from February to December 2007. Within the context of the presidential election campaign and in the immediate aftermath of the elections in May 2007, this series of forums managed to mobilise grassroots and idiosyncratic expressions of political discontents within local communities. The format was simple: screening of the film

³⁷² See Duncombe (2002), *op. cit.*

Carnets de route, followed by a horizontal non-hierarchical discussion.³⁷³ In the electoral period of the spring and summer 2007, people came to voice their discontents, suggest and search alternatives together, organise collectively around local issues like the lack of subsidies, and more generally the living conditions in the *quartiers* or simply to debate about more global issues such as, at the time, the question of the *vote utile* in the presidential elections, the political alternatives on the left, or recount their experiences of international or local instances of political alternatives. But mostly, the general feeling seemed to be that people also came to confirm that they were not isolated, that they could create alternatives together, regenerate local *communities*.³⁷⁴ Presented as a political initiative in its most legitimate form, could it not be argued that the AASV predominantly resulted in creating an activist culture of social consciousness?

Musical expression as political resistance against co-optation

At the beginning of the tour, the focus was on popular neighbourhoods, but the anti-institutional outlook was clearly stated in the text describing the initiative, displaying an absolute dread of political co-optation: ‘AFIN D’EVITER TOUTE FORME DE RECUPERATION, NOUS NE RECEVRONS PAS LES PARTIS POLITIQUES, SYNDICATS ET AUTRES ORGANISMES INSTITUTIONNALISES (merci de votre compréhension)’.³⁷⁵ This fear of co-optation reached a peak in April 2007, when Keny Arkana’s lyrics and videos were diverted by a FN militant and posted on the Internet, presenting the hip hop artist very crudely as a potential supporter of Le Pen, or at least associating the FN discourse with the lyrics of Keny Arkana.³⁷⁶ The artist reacted immediately, condemning these actions in a press release posted on the Appel Aux Sans Voix website and on various Internet media spaces. Interrupting an Appel Aux Sans Voix forum in Toulouse to record a song with an accompanying video, entitled ‘Le Front de la

³⁷³ The film *Carnets de route: un autre monde est possible* is a documentary made in 2006 by Keny Arkana and La Rage du Peuple, essentially collecting different encounters and views they came across at the World Social Forum in Bamako in 2006. A DVD of it is included in the album *Entre Ciment et Belle Etoile* (2006).

³⁷⁴ Information collected from own participant observation.

³⁷⁵ See *Appel* at: <http://www.appelauxsansvoix.org/> Text capitalised in the original text.

³⁷⁶ The original video was compiled from extracts of different songs (‘La Rage’, ‘Victoria’, ‘Nettoyage au karcher’), but taken out of their context. For instance, the lyrics ‘*Des étrangers ont brûlé nos maisons pour nous voler nos terres*’ (from the song ‘Victoria’) was looped and repeated in a very unconvincing attempt at a xenophobic statement – an admirable form of *détournement* and illustration of the dangers of editing and decontextualisation. This most spectacular video is no longer available on the Internet. However around the same period, another video was diverted more crudely by FN Internet activist, and can still be viewed there: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1utv1_keny-arkana-utilise-par-le-fn_creation

haine', she retaliated by coming up with a political response but under a musical form, in a hip hop expression.³⁷⁷

Itinerant series of popular assemblies, the AASV replaced Keny Arkana's tour in 2006-2007. Although it was focused on political discussions and popular assemblies, it still occasionally involved live performances. For instance, in the social centre *Les Tanneries* in Dijon, the collective stayed for a week to discuss with other activists and local youth, and contribute to setting up a militant street party entitled *Fête de rue contre la destruction des Tanneries* featuring a live act (June 2007). There again, culture and politics were articulated spontaneously in the self-same expression.

Cultural practice as a form of political consciousness

The AASV initiative definitely blurred the boundaries between the cultural resistance and political action undertaken by Keny Arkana and her surrounding cultural community, insofar as she definitely resorted to her reputation as an artist to attract youth in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in an attempt to politicise the grassroots. Yet, against the patronising use that has been made of French hip hop in the *banlieues* – for instance, in a campaign around the same period trying to mobilise suburban youth to vote in presidential elections yet never touching on the issue of lack of political representation – the underlying ethos of the AASV initiative increasingly stressed the importance of autonomy and self-management.

Hence, almost naturally, Keny Arkana gradually drew closer to political autonomous groups, especially from the squat scene. Throughout the year of touring with the AASV, the core collective increasingly discarded the local venues facilitated by the *militantisme associatif* networks, which often seemed to them to be too institutionalised. Grappling with the frustration deriving from the attempt to create an authentic or unmediated – or least possibly mediated – relation to grassroots communities, caught in the thorny contradictions of aspiration to garner wider participation without becoming itself an institution, and reflecting an open and approachable vision without losing sight of a resolutely radical outlook, the AASV collective progressively hosted its social forums in autonomous cultural centres and political squats. Heralding a new or renewed potential rapprochement between the *banlieue* youth and the squat scene which both developed different cultural traditions Keny Arkana gradually assimilated the cause of squatters. In September 2007 she set up an

³⁷⁷ The video can be viewed at:
http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1s84t_keny-arkana-le-front-de-la-haine_music

unannounced street gig (*concert sauvage*, sic) in the middle of a crossroad in the neighbourhood of Pâquis in Geneva, in support of the Intersquat, then under threat of eviction.³⁷⁸

In the end, it is interesting to observe that in the case of Keny Arkana and the local popular assemblies initiative of *Appel Aux Sans Voix* launched in 2007, Duncombe's argument about political consciousness underlying cultural resistance can be reversed. In fact, the cultural network and artistic collective surrounding this initiative did not produce culture to consciously serve a function of resistance for a political purpose. Instead, it resorted to culture as a form of transmission and through the collective practice of transmission, searched a process of reflection towards collective political consciousness.

Conclusion. Political denunciation as a cultural practice

Notwithstanding the paradigm of radical (revolutionary?) vs. reformist scales of resistance as a valid analytical tool of cultural practices for our case studies, all of them always stressed the importance of political denunciation within their daily cultural practice. If in the case of smaller collectives (bands) this is mainly achieved through the discourse they have in the media and through their lyrics, for bigger collectives (registered or informal associations), denunciation of the dominant ideology and assertion of alternatives can be sought in a form of daily collective practice of *lifestyle*. In the following chapter, an analysis of these two dimensions will attempt to show how political denunciation is experienced primarily as a cultural practice.

³⁷⁸ The Genève performances can be retrieved at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp6XsECySd8&feature=related>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzLscDzxNUc&feature=related>

Chapter V.

Words and deeds: the forms of resistance in musical practice

1. Subversion and opposition strategies: political denunciation as a cultural practice

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- 1.2 *Détournement*: resistance as empowerment
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- 2.1 Festive performance and the representations of social collective identity
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Conclusion. Symbolic emancipation through autonomy

In lieu of introduction, a few preliminary comments could be made to situate and delimit the analysis undertaken here. Complex, heterogeneous, and multifarious in form, music can be construed *ipso facto* as a form of discourse, wherein tempo, rhythm, melodic phrases, and performative dynamic all contribute to create an idiosyncratic language in itself. In that respect, the *beat* assumed by bass and drum lines on backing tracks (*instrus*) of rap songs should not be prosaically construed merely as formal devices whose sole purpose would be to enhance a supposed higher content (lyrics). The shape and structure of musical phrases, featuring thematic repetitions (and in some cases call-and-responses, as discussed below), chorus, breaks, ostinatos (or ‘riffs’), all draw from musical traditions which can in some cases be mainly centred on instrumental melodies (e.g.: funk, blues, African drumming, *maracatu*) and inscribed in the aesthetic representations of oppression (slavery, colonialism) and the history of emancipation.³⁷⁹ Evoked in the first section in a rapid overview (thereby probably overlooking its significance), the performative dynamic also constitutes a language in itself, or at least a form of unmediated communication, featuring variations and interplays on register, movement (tempos, body movements, alternation of aesthetic and everyday

³⁷⁹ The *maracatu* is a carnivalesque street parade taking its roots in the history of slavery, as a cathartic practice of denying misery under an ephemeral disguise. This history of cultural resistance during slavery is a common legacy shared to a relative degree by a lot of the case studies (LR, MAP, ST, VK), and reclaimed more explicitly by Voukoum in their *déboulé* practice.

discourse), dramaturgy (*mise-en-scène*, digressions, participatory interaction), all shaping the reception of the musical form as an instance of cultural *resistance*.

Also, it could be worth keeping in mind the diversity of the languages employed in the artistic productions proposed by the case studies: literally, as in the conscious and assumed use of Creole for Vokoum, or more figuratively, as in the case of the hip hop or protest song traditions. Along with the traditional difficulty associated with the tentative capture of the raw aspect of reality, the social *locus* of this specific research project brought a particularly acute sense of fragile hybridity and additional complexity to our empirical conclusions. Thus cultural margins wherein most social processes are precarious and insecure often produce complex, fragmented, multilingual and multidimensional cultural practices. The language element can be at times crucial, and in the *corpus operum*, our artists resort and sometimes mix the following languages: French, English, Spanish, Italian, Creole, Brazilian Portuguese, Arabic, and Berber.³⁸⁰ But less literally, the ‘epistemological break’, enunciated by Bourdieu and Passeron as the alienation deemed necessary for the researcher from the *doxa*, is particularly acute in this context.³⁸¹ The language used by the people involved in the case studies is everyday language, therefore poses the dilemma of appropriation and distortion for the researcher.

All in all, the two tendential forms of interaction with activist politics in musical practice sketched out above translate into two artistic traditions – not necessarily mutually exclusive, but both providing cultural shape, social outreach, and political scope for the musical forms produced, thereby endowing them with the interactive dimension underlying the very foundation of the *resistance* dynamic.³⁸² Fundamentally empirically motivated, the first form of resistance – which we shall name *festive resistance* – tends to focus mainly on performance as a form of alternative social enactment; while the second tendency – which we shall label *discursive resistance* – revolves more around discursive practices of denunciation, much more akin to political discourse. An analysis of the two different traditions of resistance at play in musical practice shall now be undertaken for our bands.

³⁸⁰ *Corpus operum*: discography specifically selected for our discursive analysis (i.e., of lyrics) in the present chapter. See *Corpus Operum* list in Reference section for detailed list of the works selected.

³⁸¹ See reflection around the notion of epistemological break in sociology developed by the authors in Bourdieu, Pierre, Passeron, Jean-Claude, & Chamboredon, Jean-Claude (1991), *The Craft of Sociology: Epistemological Preliminaries* (New York: Walter de Gruyter).

³⁸² This again calls to mind the three structural axes proposed by Duncombe (see Chapter II) to assess the extent of political engagement in cultural practice, namely *consciousness*, *social outreach*, and *results*. See Duncombe (2002), *ibid*.

1. Subversion and opposition strategies:

political denunciation as a cultural practice

In this section, we shall turn to more concrete instances of politicisation through musical practice. Three main strategies (not mutually exclusive) can be delineated: subversion, *détournement*, and more confrontational, radical opposition. The cases of OPA, MAP, and Keny Arkana may provide a concrete illustration of how in their symbolic production, our artists may resort to subversion while also merging the different scales of cultural resistance to herald a reconfiguration of radical expression. Then, the case of MAP's specific focus on *détournement* could be an example of a cultural practice of symbolic empowerment. Finally, some material from La Rumeur and Tactikollectif shall be interpreted to illustrate cases of more radical politics insofar as political denunciation lies at the heart of an oppositional stance.

1.1 Subversion as a stepping stone for appropriation

Understood in the rather broad terms of a process which 'overthrows from below' (see *OED* definition quoted above), *subversion*, and subversive expression in general, may be read as an indispensable initial step, or stepping stone for an appropriation (or re-appropriation) of expression via one own's *subjectivity*, arguably, a point of entry into politics, however partially.

Art as subversion: collective figure of the artiste engagé, renewals of an avant-garde

Subversion is a foundation of OPA. The name of the band, a playful subversion of the term OPA (*Offre Publique d'Achat*, or takeover bid) belonging to the terminology of economic violence, standing in fact for *Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre*, underlines from the start the collective (*orchestre*) as well as political dimension of the band. Establishing the *poiesis* of art as last resort and ultimate form of struggle, his teleonomic vision of the neoliberal world where war is looming round the corner also suggests the idea of a legitimate form of counter-violence (in the very term 'OPA') to resist with an artistic avant-garde, through the witty paronym of the pre-apocalyptic term 'avant-guerre'. This resolutely collective figuration of the *artiste engagé* renews the concept of *prise de parole* as the primary weapon against violence:

Engagé dans un long processus de décrétinisation de la planète (y'a du boulot, mais ils sont motivés), l'OPA ou Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-guerre prend une redoutable option d'achat sur les cerveaux des

amateurs de rock psychédélique et de textes scandés sans mesure... tout en improvisation, c'est leur règle de base, et c'est aussi ce qui en fait un groupe kaléidoscopique si surprenant et attachant.³⁸³

In that sense, the subversion of meaning through artistic creation can be construed as a form of aesthetic *praxis* of resistance, or pragmatic form of cultural resistance.

Subverting the message: merging political and artistic discourse

Written in 2006, the song *Nettoyage au karcher* by Keny Arkana is another case in point of how political discourse can be subverted by artistic discourse, staging the confrontation of two different instances of symbolic power. To replace it in its social context, the song follows on from the 2005 suburban revolts, or riots – with the debate over the name of the event itself being, arguably, a significant sign of the violently imposed depoliticisation of the uprising. On October 27 2005, the death of two teenagers, Zyed Benna and Bouna Traoré, in Clichy-sous-Bois, a working-class area on the north-eastern suburbs of Paris, who were chased by the police, and tried to hide from them in a power substation where they were electrocuted, triggered a massive movement of civil unrest and uprising, the spatial, temporal, and social scope of which was unprecedented in French postcolonial history.³⁸⁴ Two days before the start of the revolt, in Argenteuil, the Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy referred to the youth living in the estates as ‘voyous’ (thugs) and ‘racaille’ (scum), verbal abuse that gained considerable resonance through the media, particularly insofar as in June of the same year, in the midst of a tense period following a shooting that killed an eleven-year-old boy in La Courneuve, the freshly appointed Minister vowed to ‘nettoyer la cité au Kärcher’.³⁸⁵

In the song ‘Nettoyage au karcher’, Keny Arkana, makes a clear, subversive attempt to turn the saying against the institutional power uttering it: ‘C'est à L'Elysée que se cachent les plus grands des racailles’. In her now famous track, the female hip hop artist denounces a ‘gouvernement illégitime depuis le Non à la Constitution européenne’.³⁸⁶ Taking subversion one step further, Keny Arkana merges indistinctly artistic discourse and activist slogans to

³⁸³ Jonathan Hénault in *33 Tours Magazine*, March 2006, in *OPA webreview*.

³⁸⁴ It is relevant to note here that this form of immediate collective response to institutional violence in the guise of social injustice is unfortunately far from being a new phenomenon – as in an overwhelming majority of cases, riots are started as a reaction of revolt against an instance of police killing that is generally perpetrated with a racist intent. For a chronology of racist police crimes and the collective struggles led in postcolonial communities since the 1960s, see the pamphlet published for the first *Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires* in June 2007: *Remue-mémoires: petite chronologie des luttes de l'immigration postcoloniale* (Paris: FSQP 2007).

³⁸⁵ Nicolas Sarkozy was appointed Minister of the Interior on May 31 2005, on the ministerial reshuffling following the landslide for the No vote in the EU Constitution referendum. See *Le Monde*'s article ‘Nicolas Sarkozy persiste et signe contre les racailles’, November 2005, retrieved at: http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2005/11/11/nicolas-sarkozy-persiste-et-signe-contre-les-racailles_709112_3224.html

³⁸⁶ See Keny Arkana, ‘Nettoyage au karcher’, in *Entre Ciment et Belle Etoile* (Because Music, 2006).

encapsulate, and hence potentially provide an alternative channel of political identification for the dormant anger experienced collectively by most *banlieue* youth. Set against the general context of social and racial inequalities in France, this anecdote stands as a good illustration of the renewal of a sub-culture of resistance – scarce but resolutely established, emerging in musical practices of postcolonial communities as a collective radical expression of outrage and symbolic rebellion against the institutional violence exercised against them.

1.2 *Détournement: resistance as empowerment*

Not sparing with the sharp tool of humour, balanced with outspoken lucidity, MAP seemed to appreciate from the onset the value of *détournement* as a tool of empowerment. However, the collective seems to give *détournement* a clearly political orientation. This is most blatant in the very witty choice of name for the band: ‘*Notre nom, c’est une petite provocation, vu que nos politiciens ne s’occupent pas de nos affaires mais des leurs, il fallait créer notre propre ministère. Et ça collait à notre musique qui est simple et très artisanale, finalement. Donc pourquoi pas « populaire » ?*’.³⁸⁷ Alluding to their *étranger* origins that are not always well accepted or tolerated in a form of ‘discursive hijacking’ of a state institution (*Ministère des Affaires Etrangères*), *Ministère des Affaires Populaires* also implies a claim of grassroots autonomous power belonging to ‘the people’, i.e., the people from ‘popular classes’:

Quand on a commencé à réfléchir à un nom, Ministère des Affaires Populaires est venu assez vite. Ça évoque deux choses: il y a d’abord l’idée que ça appartient au peuple, mais « Ministère » amène aussi l’idée de la domination, parce que qui dit populaire dit classes populaires, classes dominées, classes pauvres, classes nombreuses... Ça évoque des gens qui nous ressemblent, parce que notre musique, elle est inspirée par ce qu’on voit, par les gens qu’on rencontre, par notre famille, nos voisins, nos connaissances. C’est simple: quand je suis en phase d’écriture, je sors me balader dans mon quartier, et je pars de ce que je vois. On est à la fois dans la chronique de terrain et dans la dénonciation. Et il nous arrive aussi d’être dans le second degré. On parlait de nos influences musicales, mais on est aussi les héritiers de Guignol, un guignol d’aujourd’hui: on met en scène notre réalité, on met en scène les politiques, avec les petites gens autour, quand on fait les « youyous » par exemple... Il y a un côté bouffonnerie, au sens politique du terme.³⁸⁸

By playing with different levels of discursive registers (political, artistic, cultural), MAP creates its very own imaginary *Ministère*, or counter-institutional symbolic power. The surrealist fusion of artistic form with political discourse provides MAP with a discursive tool of symbolic appropriation of their own social condition, arguably a political action in itself. Revisiting the traditional political function of clowns and buffoons, the notion of *Affaires*

³⁸⁷ Dias in interview with RFI musiques, in *MAP webreview*.

³⁸⁸ Saïd in interview with Pierre Tévanian, ‘Les bronzés font du ch’ti’, in *Mouvements* 2009/1 (n° 57), pp 97-109. The ‘youyous’ allusion refers to the Axiom’s song feat. MAP ‘Des youyous dans ma mairie’. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kjgbt_0Ex90

Populaires must also transpire through musical practice. MAP often ironically reclaims their popular artist identity as *saltimbanque*, wherein music is construed as a creative and cathartic mediation to express political criticism. For Pierre Tévanian, the *populaire* component of MAP features three main facets: the biographical dimension, stemming from the socio-economic background of musicians; the deliberate aesthetic *parti pris*, springing from the cultural influences and the deriving musical choices in the practice; and a *political* commitment, developing as a result of the first two facets, as a form of support of the lower classes against the ruling class.³⁸⁹

Overwhelmingly pregnant in hip hop culture, the practice of *détournement* is widely resorted to by case studies who revisit a cultural tradition to appropriate it in their present context, a strategy of political denunciation through semantic subversion of discourse. During the anti-CPE movement, activists were also observed to resort to *détournement*. While in student processions, new, *truer* meanings for the acronym CPE (Contrat Première Embauche) were attributed to the word, transforming it into mock slogans on placards such as ‘Contrat Poubelle Embauche’ or the even less ambiguous ‘Contre la Précarité et l’Exploitation’,³⁹⁰ post-surrealist slogans like ‘Rêve Générale’ (a poetic pun on words on the traditional motif of *grève générale*) were also to be seen on stickers put up anonymously (or not clearly claimed officially by organised groups) at bus stops, on metro signs, on street poles, and other items composing the public, urban landscape. A more specific and oriented form of subversion in form, *détournement* puts in motion a process of transcoding or cross-coding which create open semantic spaces of new symbols and codes. In that sense, *détournement* is resorted to as a tool of empowerment as symbolic level. Just as militants may aestheticise political discourse to create their own mottos, conversely, artists may subvert political discourse in their discursive productions, thereby politicising aesthetic discourse.

1.3 Opposition: cultural radicalisation as a politicisation of discursive practices?

However, for some of our bands, *détournement* may be deemed insufficient to constitute in itself a form of resistance. A third strategy of cultural resistance may hence be isolated and labelled ‘opposition’, insofar as it should be construed as an opposition to cultural imperialism as spelt out by Edward Saïd in *Culture and Imperialism*: ‘opposition and resistance to imperialism are articulated together on a largely common although disputed

³⁸⁹ Tévanian (2009), *ibid.*

³⁹⁰ See Kouvelakis (2007), *ibid.*, p 275.

terrain provided by culture'.³⁹¹ For our artists, the strategy of 'opposition' emerged, voluntarily or not, usually out of necessity, from a need to clarify, or radicalise their approach, the locus of radicalisation being essentially seated in discourse. The case of the trial of La Rumeur vs. the Ministry of the Interior may illustrate the strategy of cultural resistance as opposition.

Context: uncompromising musical practice rooted in the postcolonial experience

Bringing to the *rap conscient* ('conscious hip hop') tradition the subjective insight of their own postcolonial experience, La Rumeur have always had a radical approach to their own musical practice, a breeding ground of the explicit politicisation to come with the trial. Not only did the band willingly choose to ensure economic autonomy by setting up their own label, they also strived to keep their integrity and prevent self-censorship by refusing to work with any of the mainstream media. The cultural content of their artistic production (lyrics) and independent public denunciations is uncompromising and radical, undertaken through self-produced promotional material. But it has also materialised a link between the musical collective and political activists, particularly around the question of police brutality (*bavures policières*). Although the audience of the band features a significant number of students, young intellectuals and militants, not necessarily matching the expected profile of suburban, postcolonial communities, La Rumeur have a privileged relation to the campaign against racist police crimes led by the *Mouvement de l'Immigration et des Banlieues*, a grassroots militant movement anchored in suburban France.³⁹²

In July 2002, the band was sued by the Ministry of the Interior, headed at the time by Nicolas Sarkozy, for libelling the police ('*diffamation envers la Police nationale*') in an article written by Hamé in a magazine called *La Rumeur magazine* the band distributed together with their first album *L'ombre sur la mesure* (2002). This heralded for the collective an involvement in a long-term court case against the state deployed on such huge and unprecedented temporal, judicial and political scale that it still stands as a unique fact in the history of French rappers prosecuted for libel. The reasons for prosecuting rappers for libel generally regard the state, via either the police (NTM, Ministère A.M.E.R.), or the French state itself (as was the case for Sniper for their song 'La France' in 2001). The only other case of appeal known is NTM, who had gone to the Cour d'Appel in 1997, and Joey Starr

³⁹¹ Edward Saïd (1994), *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage), p 241. See esp. Chapter 3, entitled 'Resistance and Opposition'.

³⁹² See <http://mibmib.free.fr/>

had been condemned to a heavy fine of 50,000 FF and a two month prison sentence. Whether this was unwillingly caused initially or insofar as this responsibility has been publicly claimed as political, it also thrust La Rumeur into a much more concrete and direct implication in politicisation of cultural resistance.

Regain de tension: state repression vs. politicisation of resistance

In November 2004, Hamé was summoned to appear at the Paris Tribunal de Grande Instance.³⁹³ Extracted from Hamé's article, the exact passages incriminated by the Ministry of the Interior as libelling the police were the following (exact incriminated phrases in bold font):³⁹⁴

1. [...L]es rapports du Ministère de l'Intérieur ne feront jamais état des centaines de nos frères abattus par les forces de police sans qu'aucun des assassins n'ait été inquiété.
2. [...A]u travers d'organisations comme SOS racisme, créée de toutes pièces par le pouvoir PS de l'époque pour contribuer à désamorcer le radicalisme des revendications de la Marche des Beurs: l'égalité des droits devient l'égalité devant l'entrée des boîtes de nuit. **La justice pour les jeunes assassinés par la police disparaît sous le colosse slogan médiatique 'Touche pas à mon pote !' ou 'Vive le métissage des couleurs !', etc...**
3. [...A]ux humiliés l'humilité et la honte, aux puissants le soin de bâtir des grilles de lecture. A l'exacte opposé des manipulations affleure la dure réalité. Et elle a le cuir épais. **La réalité est que vivre aujourd'hui dans nos quartiers c'est avoir plus de chance de vivre des situations d'abandon économique, de fragilisation psychologique, de discrimination à l'embauche, de précarité du logement, d'humiliations policières régulières, d'instruction bâclée, d'expérience carcérale, d'absence d'horizon, de repli individualiste cadennassé, de tentation à la débrouille illicite...** c'est se rapprocher de la prison ou de la mort un peu plus vite que les autres.³⁹⁵

After a moderate speech for the prosecution, the verdict was delivered a month later: Hamé was acquitted, with the tribunal deeming the incrimination null and void. Coming under the right to freedom of expression, they estimated that the phrases, 'put in context, were a mere critique of cases of abusive conduct which the police might be liable to be blamed for over the course of the last fifty years, with the events being considered in their global aspect'.

While this was the first time a hip hop band had actually won a trial for libelling, the Ministry of the Interior lodged an appeal against the decision in April 2005. In May 2006, Hamé appears in front of the Paris Court of Appeal, and discharged again a month later. Turning into a genuine affair, the case continued to escalate to reach a unique scale: in a third attack which was starting to undoubtedly look like state harassment, the Ministry of the

³⁹³ French equivalent of the County Court, dealing with civic matters of common law order.

³⁹⁴ An exhaustive historical account of the legal case entitled *L'Affaire La Rumeur*, compiles all its different stages and features the complete transcription of Hamé's article *Insécurité sous la plume d'un barbare*. This PDF document formerly available at: www.la-rumeur.com/index.html could at time of writing no longer be found on the band's website, but most of the different components of the article can still be retrieved at: www.acontresens.com/contreponts/societe

³⁹⁵ Excerpts from 'Insécurité sous la plume d'un barbare', *La Rumeur* magazine n°1, April 2002.

Interior decided to lodge a second appeal on the case, and take it to the higher judicial stage of *Cour de Cassation* (final court of appeal).

If the second album, *Regain de Tension*, released in 2004, is infused by the hurdles of the judicial struggle La Rumeur was going through with the trial, the band's third album *Du Coeur à l'outrage* released between the two rounds of the presidential election (23rd April 2007), is an more radical assertion of resistance. Shortly after Sarkozy was elected president on 6th May 2007, the trial of La Rumeur vs. Ministry of the Interior was reactivated: on 26th June 2007, action against the verdict was taken, and a cancellation requested on the grounds that the incriminated statement '*contained facts* aiming to undermine the police and bring them into disrepute'.³⁹⁶ On 11th July 2007, the Court of Cassation cancelled the second acquittal sentence, and the case was referred to the Versailles Court of Appeal, summoning Hamé on 3rd June 2008 for yet another court hearing, for a third time. In the meantime, the La Rumeur Affair had taken a unprecedented scope in the media and public opinion circles: the trial was covered on the front page of *Le Monde* twice in 2007, and in the summer, an online petition was launched, gathering over 10,000 signatures, including artists, journalists, activists, politicians, and intellectuals. After a third acquittal pronounced in September 2008, the Ministry of the Interior decided to once again lodge an appeal against the verdict. In June 2010, Hamé was acquitted for a fourth time, once and for all, on the grounds that his statement came under the right to freedom of expression. The judicial struggle against the state, which had lasted for more than eight years, could not leave politically immune a collective already endowed with sharp radical social consciousness.

Cultural imperialism, radicalisation of cultural resistance

The case of La Rumeur, which had to gradually radicalise their approach in the face of *three acts of censorship* (i.e., from their own sub-cultural peers; from the mainstream media, incorporated to the market sphere; and finally from the French state itself) shows how cultural radicalisation takes place in the backdrop of increasing social, economic, and ultimately political tensions, which become visible in moments of conflict. Taking a clear oppositional stance in discourse and/or in their practice, for La Rumeur, the aspiration to autonomy gradually became valued as a form of symbolic self-defence and countercultural assertion.

³⁹⁶ A *Contresens* article, *ibid.*

The 'opposition' strategy may come across as more 'purely' political, insofar as it is less mixed and heterogeneous in terms of reception, choosing to discard or downplay the festive dimension of the given musical practice for instance. Notwithstanding idiosyncratic hence necessarily heterogeneous, the contents and form of La Rumeur's artistic production cannot be easily assimilated insofar as it specifically seeks to emphasize the specificity, radicality of their stance, in a strategy of polarisation and confrontation:

Tu connais La Rumeur sous ses faux airs
Fais pas genre tu t'y perds
Sous surveillance des RG ce quoi qu'on nous fassions
Comme pour tromper leur vigilance
Bref! qui veut nous faire la l'çon?
Tu connais La Rumeur sous ses faux airs frère!
Sous surveillance des RG ce quoi qu'on nous fassions
Bref! qui veut nous faire la l'çon?

La Rumeur entre les mains d'la rue, la putain d'sa race
Exclue des mondanités de peur qu'il y ait d'la casse
Naturellement trop de crève
Trop pessimiste pour être des marchands d'rêve
Ou rentrer dans les rangs C'est désespérant, inhérent à c'rap
Tu sais comment on se tape
En c'te période creuse depuis le fond du cratère
S'engage un nouveau bras de fer
Tu connais le son des grands frères
En basse fréquence saturé d'aigreur d'une rare violence
C'est La Rumeur en règle qui reprend d'la voix
La pègre se redéploie
Comprenez moi
Des halls jusqu'en haut lieu
Tu sais on est comme l'huile sur le feu
Qui crépite sous une voiture de schmitt
Pas uniquement j't'arrête tout d'suite
C'est ça à trop vouloir sous titrer le film noir de nos vies
Et notre répartie
Autrement dit pour en avoir l'coeur net
On en oublie d'surveiller la bête.³⁹⁷

Paving the way for political denunciation, this underlying feature generated in its turn a radicalisation of the cultural practice and the ideological position towards state institutions. This process of radicalisation when pushed against situations of material confrontation can also be seen in the associative dynamic. Developing the autonomous ambition against the inadequacy of state cultural policy, the case of the Tactikollectif shall also illustrate how a politicisation of the cultural practices may occur as a form of polarisation and generate a clearer discursive opposition to the state.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁷ 'Non sous-titré', in *Du cœur à l'outrage* (2007).

³⁹⁸ Further discussed below. See Chapter VII.

2. Festive resistance: performance as a new space of citizenship

2.1 *Festive performance and the representations of social collective identity*

Performance as performative production of social interaction

To undertake a brief interpretation of the occurrences of festive performance observed during fieldwork, the methodological notion of performative production could be revealing. The perspective adopted by social constructionism seems in essence to consider that social phenomena, consciousness and interaction cannot develop outside specific social contexts, to the extent that social groups and phenomena are necessarily constructs, or artefacts, participating in the construction of social reality.³⁹⁹ Applied to performing arts, this concept is all the more valid that performance itself is a deliberately constructed artefact of social interaction, self-consciously claiming its constructed aspect as artistic (symbolic) production. In the social settings characterising our selected acts – disadvantaged communities which tend to value social realism in artistic production as a surrogate form of collective identification of their own condition, performance may be construed as a *production (mise en scène)* of social interaction – which in itself can be seen as a microcosm (*mise-en-abyme*) of social constructionism when applied to performing arts.

As the example of MAP may show, the *festive* dimension of performance hence becomes a crucial stake to generate a sense of celebrative collectivity, the creation of a common social identity. MAP systematically starts and finishes their performances with the audience. To open their live appearances, the band enters the venue by cutting through the audience, staging the tales of their mixed *ch'ti* and foreign roots, dressed in miners' outfits and blue overalls, to assert their working class origins. At the end of their gigs, MAP usually moves in the audience again, singing and dancing together for a moment of *bal-musette*. During fieldwork, Mouss & Hakim have been observed to do the same thing on numerous occasions (particularly in their festival Origines Contrôlées), when the size of the venue allows it.

Equally, when in their *apéros d'origines contrôlées* (AOC), performed in small bars and local cafés, Mouss & Hakim play in the middle of the crowd, they forcibly insist through

³⁹⁹ See Burr, Vivien (1995), *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* (London: Routledge); Searle, John (1995), *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press).

performance on a sense of shared collectivity.⁴⁰⁰ Those participatory moments during performance proceed to a reconfiguration, and (re-)foundation of common socio-cultural codes usually experienced on an emotional register during the performance, all forms of symbolic power to appropriate collectively as a community. An anthropological interpretation could view those occurrences of performance as artificial triggers of sociability.⁴⁰¹ Consciously and inherently rooted in aesthetic forms, live performances are hence experienced as artificial social forms but positively reclaimed as such through their *festive* dimension.

The event can also be posited as an interactive construct of socialisation, akin to the ritual form, as the case of Voukoum, who reclaim the cultural legacy of their roots as slaves practising the African rituals of the *mas*.⁴⁰² Derived from Goffman's approach, a dramaturgical interpretation of performance would again proceed to a *mise-en-abyme*, insofar as here again, the very *performative* nature of social interaction in the construction of social reality is achieved through a deliberately *conscious*, performative process of socialisation through performance.⁴⁰³ In terms of cultural *resistance*, the power of festive performance also lies in its mimetic power. A double-edged phenomena, since it can also herald a form of depoliticisation of dissent, live performance can be construed as a metaphor for activism: although this does not suffice in itself to produce social change or constitute a strategic plan to challenge the root causes of oppression – since the political potential of it depends mostly on use and reception rather than the form itself – festive performance focuses on *doing*. Performing social and political passions, it endeavours to transform ideas into actions, a performative, active process of social transformation.⁴⁰⁴

Festive participation as a sphere of social encounter and cultural mobility

In that sense, the highly participatory dimension in live performance generates a shared space of social encounter, encouraging cultural mobility. Characterised by its 'anti-establishment, anti-capitalist stance, supporting social movements and pressure groups,

⁴⁰⁰ The acronym AOC is a subversion of the original meaning, used for good wine or cheese, 'Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée'.

⁴⁰¹ See Leveratto, Jean-Marc (2006), *Introduction à l'anthropologie du spectacle* (Paris: La Dispute), pp 124-127.

⁴⁰² See further below in this chapter for a more detailed description of the *mas*. For an anthropological overview of the difference between performance and ritual in terms of social processes at play, see Handelman, D. (1997), 'Rituels et spectacles. Anthropologie: problématiques et perspectives; franchir les frontières', in *Revue Internationale des Sciences Sociales* N° 153, pp 423-436.

⁴⁰³ See Goffman, Ervin (1959), *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books).

⁴⁰⁴ See Duncombe (2002), *op. cit.*

fundraising, and playing in abnormal venues', the 'open door co-operative' Tarace Boulba seemed naturally prone to mobility,⁴⁰⁵ standing as emblematic of this process. More specifically, the *Africa Boulba* project (2003-2006), and the more recent *America Boulba* project (2007-2010) perfectly illustrate the performative dimension of festive participation and cultural mobility.

The African Boulba project (2003-2006). In 2003, Tarace launched the project Africa Boulba. The idea was to encourage artistic and cultural exchange. In the summer of 2003, around 50 *taraciens* travelled with their own coach to Mali and Burkina Faso for a tour of five weeks, where they played in various contexts. Performing gigs with local bands, or even on the roof of their slowly moving bus as a parade in smaller towns or villages, they also settled for short stays to perform artistic residences, with the music collective Benkadi Balani in Bamako and with the artists Abdoulaye Traoré and Kantala in Ouagadougou. The following year (2004), Tarace organised a tour in France and Belgium with the African musicians, performing together on stage, illustrating in artistic terms their ethos of cultural encounter and *métissage*. They were also invited to play for the 2005 edition of the festival Banlieues Rythmes in Dakar, Senegal.

This memorable African experience was immortalised by Tarace Boulba's third album *Merci pour le tiep*, recorded live at La Pêche during three exceptional performances in November 2005, and released in 2006, featuring a bonus DVD recounting their African experience:

Symbole de ces valeurs, de ces rencontres, de ces aventures qui animent les cœurs du collectif, *Merci pour le tiep*, un coup de chapeau en direction des peuples africains qui nous ont accueilli chez eux. *Merci pour le tiep*, une façon de revendiquer une recette ancestrale comme dogme musical (*le tiep est un plat que l'on adapte selon ses moyens et selon les produits disponibles pour le plaisir du plus grand nombre*). *Merci pour le tiep*, le meilleur moyen de saluer les foyers maliens de Montreuil de préparer ce plat typique et bon marché qui remplit les estomacs les jours de moins bien.⁴⁰⁶

The America Boulba project (2007-2010). Armed with their African as well as European experience – the band performed over the years all over Europe in all kinds of contexts (festivals, street events, small concerts) in Spain, Germany, Switzerland, UK and Ireland, as well as Hungary (Sziget festival), Tarace Boulba could confidently embark onto their next travelling mission. Emerging in 2007, *America Boulba*, an '*aventure [qui] s'inscrit dans l'histoire du groupe comme la continuité de ses envies de partager la musique et de*

⁴⁰⁵ Quote from *TB webreview*.

⁴⁰⁶ Promotional material found in 'Tarace, *Merci pour le tiep* bio 2006', internal archives collected at Tarace Boulba's main base in Montreuil in 2006-2007.

repousser les frontières’ was a crucial project for the band, insofar as it meant returning to their musical roots along ‘*la route du Funk*’.⁴⁰⁷

The symbolic impetus underlying the American tour following the Mississippi river could also be found in the history of emancipation, triggering cultural migrations and musical creations in *black music*:

La route du Mississippi que va prendre Tarace est celle empruntée par plusieurs générations au cours de l’histoire américaine, notamment les esclaves noirs émancipés des grandes plantations du sud à la fin du 19ème siècle. En effet après les lois abolissant l’esclavage, toute la main d’œuvre des plantations s’est retrouvée aimantée par le travail disponible dans les villes du Nord en pleine industrialisation. Au cours des années sur ce chemin suivant le Mississippi ont éclos différents courants musicaux: d’abord les origines africaines importées dans les villes du sud poseront les fondations de la musique noire américaine. Plusieurs décennies plus tard ces rythmes de la Nouvelle Orléans, mal menés par *les grands soirs* de l’histoire se fixeront dans les villes plus au Nord semant au passage le Jazz puis le Rythm’n’Blues dans les années 50. Sur des générations, partout où se sont installés ces populations exilés du sud, leurs enfants aussi continuèrent à semer pour arriver aujourd’hui à une histoire de la musique noire américaine riche de multiples courants dont Tarace s’est largement nourri depuis toujours: la Soul et la Funk en premiers choix.⁴⁰⁸

2.2 Performance, representation, and participation: a shared space of empowerment

Thus, the highly participatory dimension developed in live performance by collectives such as MAP, Moleque de Rua, Voukoum, or Tarace Boulba produces spaces of collective resistance, akin to Hakim Bey’s *Temporary Autonomous Zones* (TAZ).⁴⁰⁹ The representation of social collective identity through festive participation generates, in a given space and for a given moment, a shared space of encounter, symbolic reconfiguration, and ultimately an interstice of collective empowerment.

La rue as a shared space of empowerment: the street parade as symbolic appropriation

As discussed throughout our analysis, the re-appropriation of public space, and of the street in particular, stands as an inescapable, grassroots step into collective empowerment. This is more particularly true for quite a few of our bands: Jolie Môme, Keny Arkana, MAP, Moleque de Rua, Mouss & Hakim, Tarace Boulba and Voukoum, all posit the street at the centre of their performative practice, to the extent that it becomes part and parcel of the production of their music.⁴¹⁰

Proceeding to this symbolic appropriation through the practice of the *déboulé*, literally taking over the streets of Badibou (Basse-Terre) for a whole week, Voukoum ritualises this

⁴⁰⁷ From ‘Dossier America Boulba, 12/04/2007’, internal archives collected at Tarace Boulba’s main base in Montreuil in 2006-2007.

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁹ See Bey, Hakim, *op.cit.*

⁴¹⁰ Notes from fieldwork journal, self-generated resource, 2006-2008.

form of social empowerment by reviving the tradition of the *mas*. From their inception in the late 1980s to the mid 1990s, Voukoum extended their influence and activities in their local community in *Badibou* (Bas-du-Bourg in Creole). The association gradually gained esteem, numbers and visibility, and organised regular workshops in their community to transmit and develop their knowledge. Fundamentally rooted in a lower class background, the band has also taken a radically anti-commodification stance to favour greater accessibility to and popular participation in socio-cultural events: percussion building and *mas* making are all designed from cheap or recycled material, triggering creativity. ‘Marroons’ were runaway slaves in the Carribean colonies, in Central and Latin America, who formed independent settlements together during colonialism. The term derives from the notion of *marrooning*, i.e. the deliberate leaving of a person in a remote area, such as an uninhabited place or desert island, a form resistance practised as a way of life customary to pirates and rebellious crewmen in the 17th and 18th centuries.⁴¹¹ By extension, it could be argued that in the different *mas* they produce, Voukoum proceeds to a form of cultural *marrooning*. Reclaiming oral tradition to seek authenticity and the appropriation of their cultural identity, they offer more than 15 different *mas*, all recalling the history of colonial domination, and their identity as ex-slaves of African descent, featuring the following: *Mas a Tirayé Sénégal* (about the famous contingent of Senegalese infantrymen used under colonial France against other enemy colonial natives), *Mas a Rannyon* (‘rags’ mask, celebrating the Vye Neg culture), *Mas a Kongo* (as a homage to Guy Pommier), *Mas A Roukou* and *Mas a Zombi* (both typical of Carribean culture), *Mas a Glas* (with small mirrors), *Mas Bababwa* (mask and puppets), *Mas a Fwet* (featuring a whip), *Mas a te e feyaj Gwadeloup* (with clay and Guadeloupian vegetation), etc.⁴¹²

If the collective entertains an ambivalent relation to political resistance, their assertion as a cultural movement in itself is their main enactment of resistance. Committed to the creation of social alternatives to delinquency for the street youth of the disadvantaged area of Bas-du-Bourg and for socially ill-inserted communities, Voukoum are generally strongly opposed to institutional political powers or parties, which they consider corrupted. Their emergence as a cultural movement is a striking instance of a form of *identity* politics, bestowing crucial significance to the quest(ion) of *origins*. Reclaiming the use of Creole, Voukoum attempts to

⁴¹¹ See Price, Richard (1996), *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press) ; Thompson, Alvin O. (2006), *Flight to freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press).

⁴¹² Guy Pommier: cultural activist and one of the founders of Voukoum, now deceased. Vye Neg: literally meaning ‘bad negro’ in Creole, term referring to rebellious slaves, and used to refer to street counterculture. For iconography, see Voukoum website: <http://www.potomitan.info/gwadeloup/voukoum2008.php>

expose history from the point of view of the colonized, reverting to the origins of colonialism rooted in the slave trade. The *Mouvman Kiltirel Gwadeloup* draws attention to colonialism as an intrinsic feature of the history of Guadeloupe through its artistic creations, particularly in a lot of the *mas* (masks) used during the *déboulés*. Therefore, the contents and conditions of festive performance are experienced *ipso facto* as forms of political denunciation. The *Mas Tirayé-Sénégal* for instance, highlights the history of Senegalese soldiers the French colonial empire used as infantrymen to defend its colonial conquests. A tribute to Louis Delgrès and the history of uprisings against slavery, the *Déboulé La Répression* reclaims resistance as a historical legacy for the postcolonial generation. Set up with an approach of *lésprî a dérizyon-la* (spirit of derision, or irony) the *Mas* characters and material are based on a mix of the different past and present figures of this repression: camouflage material for the military, dark blue outfits to impersonate the police, *gendarmes* or *CRS*, white outfits for the judges, prefects, and clergy.⁴¹³

Festive participation through repetitions, echos, and call-and-response

The occurrences of festive performance observed also revolve around participation, a dynamic approach to socialisation enabling an interactive (or *participatory*) reconfiguration of collective identities and social *representations*. One specific performing technique which was resorted to by many artists to enhance festive participation is the musical practice of call-and-response, imported from blues and African music, and defined in these terms:

Sometimes overlapping alternation between two performers or groups of performers, especially between a solo singer and a group of singers. Diverse African-derived musics, including 20th century popular styles in the U.S., the Caribbean, and Latin America, employ such exchanges between a lead singer's or instrumentalist's improvisation and a group's recurring responses. African American popular musics adapt it, for example, in interplays between a blues or rock singer and a guitar, two sections of a jazz ensemble, or a soul singer and an audience. Many scholars see this practice as evidence of conceptual links among the musics of the African diaspora.⁴¹⁴

This technique of call-and-response can be found for instance in the way Jolie Môme structure their songs, featuring systematic alternation between solo and chorus singing, as in the song 'Partie de campagne', or solo singers singing verses, and an *chorus* or vocal ensemble singing the chorus as in 'Ça gaze', which can sound like political slogans to sing

⁴¹³ The account of Louis Delgrès who evaded with 300 rebels, and their tragic heroic ending in collective suicide is evoked above, in Chapter IV. For iconography, see Voukoum website, *ibid*.

⁴¹⁴ Randell, Don Michael ed. (2003), *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th edn (Cambridge, Mass & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), pp 133-134.

together in demonstrations: ‘Le mouton noir’ also offers a pattern of call-and-response, with a dynamic interplay between a repeated sung chorus and solo interventions.⁴¹⁵

Although a more than classic technique, the participation of the audience during performances is almost systematic for our case studies. When singing ‘Nous sommes les premiers sur le rap’, La Rumeur lets the audience respond and utter the abusive term that follows (*‘fils de pute !’*), allowing the audience to share and identify more closely with their rage against Skyrock as an epitome of the whole apparatus revolving around musical industries, betraying the authenticity and original spirit of hip hop. Influenced by funk and rhythm and blues, Tarace Boulba almost systematically structure their songs according to the principle of call-and-response between the instruments, as on the opening of the track ‘New Orleans express’ for instance, where saxophones respond by repeating the motif played by trombones. Because participation is the core *raison d’être* of the brass band, but also due to the size of the collective (usually between 20 and 30 musicians on stage), call-and-response is a useful form of internal communication and sharing on a large, collective scale. It can be heard between vocals alternating solo singing with a repetition of a phrase by a vocal chorus, the alternation of female and male choruses (*‘Merci pour le tiep’*). Echos and repetitions are also strategies to involve the audience. On the songs ‘Education’ and ‘Zacharia’, voices and trombones mutually echo the same musical phrase.⁴¹⁶

In performance, call-and-response and repetition can also be combined and applied more broadly. Hence sometimes, the response needs not be verbalised with lyrics and are simple notes sung by the audience: when performing, Tarace Boulba has the audience repeat the melody at the end of the song ‘Merci pour le tiep’ repeating it *ad lib* in a crescendo movement as a finale. Mouss & Hakim also resort to the exact same method when ending their gigs, on songs such as ‘Anfass’ or ‘Awah’,⁴¹⁷ but they also use verbal call-and-response, making the audience repeat some simple phrases such as the chorus of ‘Salutations révolutionnaires’, again enabling a closer identification with a sense of political resistance:

Quand faut y aller faut y aller
Unis et solidaires derrière la même bannière
Quand faut y aller faut y aller
Lève le poing, salutations révolutionnaires.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁵ All those songs feature on the most recent album *Ya Basta!* (2007).

⁴¹⁶ All those songs feature on the most recent album *Merci pour le tiep* (2006).

⁴¹⁷ See the band’s performing ‘Awah’ at Nouveau Casino, Paris, in June 2010 at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWceAqRilW8&p=58AD8DA306D03C9F&playnext=1&index=21>

⁴¹⁸ MAP feat. Mouss & Hakim, ‘Salutations révolutionnaires’, on MAP, *Les bronzés font du ch’ti* (2009).

In some instances, the form of call-and-response can be more complex, and even more interactive. For instance, as a collective based on improvisation, OPA may invite the audience to come on stage to contribute to live performances. As to MAP, the hip hop band often stages the very theatrical song ‘Dégage!’ telling the story of an unlucky, naive young character of working class background who can find neither job, nor girlfriend, and is victim of institutional racism in addition to his own naive, awkward approach to the world (and for comic purposes, repeatedly, to women more particularly). When the girl he noticed finally accepts him, the band inserts a long digression with a North African wedding dance, featuring traditional music heard on such occasions, enticing all the audience to sing and dance.⁴¹⁹ In this instance, call-and-response becomes a more interactive form of communication.

It should be noted that in social psychology, call-and-response is characterised by ‘spontaneous verbal and non-verbal interaction between speaker and listener in which all of the statements (“calls”) are punctuated by expressions (“responses”) from the listener’.⁴²⁰ Foster underlines that in African culture, call-and-response is a ‘pervasive pattern of democratic participation – in public gatherings, in the discussion of civic affairs, in religious rituals, as well as in vocal and instrumental musical expression’.⁴²¹ The *batucada* tradition practised by Moleque de Rua in their workshops and in the resulting live performances they set up including residence-workshops participants perfectly match this broader understanding of the notion. The rhythm of the *batucada* parade, given by the *repinique* (high-pitched tom-tom) player, leading the percussion ensemble is immediately repeated by other percussionists (a small ensemble of musicians and participants), who repeat the exact same motif on a *tamborim* (small, lighter percussion played with a stick) or an *agogô* (cowbell).⁴²² Arguably, the repeated motifs may sound like incantations (as in the case of Voukoum in their *véyé kiltirel*), or more simply and generally, the repetition of rhythms sound like exhortation to action and participation.

⁴¹⁹ See the interactive performance of MAP on ‘Dégage!’ at:

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1q9nv_map-degage_music

⁴²⁰ Foster, Michèle (2001), ‘Pay Leon Pay Leon Pay Leon Paleontologist: Using call-and-response to facilitate language mastery and literacy acquisition among African American students’, in Lanehart, Sonja ed., *Sociocultural and Historical Contexts of African American English: Varieties of English around the World* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company).

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² For more information about *batucada* and *samba* see *The Harvard Dictionary of Music* (op.cit.); for more substantial account of their origins in *maracatu* and *frevo* traditions and development, see Crook, Larry (2009), *Music of Northeast Brazil* (London & New York: Routledge).

To make call-and-response even more participatory, when performing live, Keny Arkana has sometimes been seen to ask the audience to replace the backing track (*'instru'*) altogether.⁴²³ On the track 'Le missile est lancé',⁴²⁴ she split the audience into three groups, asking each group to beat-box or sing a rhythm mimicking the drumbeat or base line: one performing the beat of the base drum, one performing the beat of the snare drum, and a final one humming a basic base line. Once this musical interaction set, Keny would sing *a capella* with the audience participation in the background, establishing the notions of collectivity, solidarity, and shared empowerment at the very heart of the performance.

2.3 Live performance as a springboard for uniting political resistance?

Practice of rally vs. practice of protest

All in all, the questions of space and participation are crucial to bestow a political potential to festive resistance. Yet, the political dimension of that self-same resistance always depends on the specific social context, but also needs to be inscribed in the broader political background against which the performances take place. MAP provides an exemplary case of how in certain specific contexts, live performance may facilitate militant activity, as a springboard for uniting political resistance.

MAP on tour: non-sectarian commitments and mobilising encounters

Throughout their first tour (2006-2007), an extended 18-month journey occasioning many encounters with different militant platforms, and expanding the context and possibilities of concerts internationally – the band played in Belgium, Switzerland, Hungary, Morocco, Israel and Palestine – MAP gradually grew to conceive of live performance as a dynamic and festive form of popular mobilisation, as Saïd recalled after the tour:

Moi je crois qu'aujourd'hui tu fais pas de musique pour faire des grosses scènes. T'as des ventes de disques et tu compenses avec des radios etc, pour pouvoir le rendre. [...] On raconte des vies, on raconte des histoires, moi j'ai envie de les rendre aux gens parce que c'est les gens qui nous envoient là. Et quand tu fais un concert sur la place... disons à République, on avait fait un concert tu vois, sur le trottoir. [...] C'était pendant une période de crise de mobilisation, on essayait de créer un contre-pouvoir – un rapport de force surtout. Créer un rapport de force avec la préfecture, avec l'Etat policier de Sarkozy, et le seul moyen de créer un rapport de force, c'est de mobiliser, mais un rapport de force, c'est le nombre... [...] nous on tourne beaucoup on a un public etc, et à un moment, c'est mon rôle, enfin, en tant que chanteur de MAP, de dire « ok, le public est là, le nôtre, putain mais... allez, on fait le concert dans la rue là ! ». Et nous là, en fin de manif, on a fait un concert sur la place sur les pavés quoi ! On a ramené les enceintes bing bing bing ! Et on a mis 2000 personnes sur la place. Tu vois, t'aimerais trop à un moment de participer... à une rencontre entre les gens: [...] est-ce que la musique sert à quelque chose dans ces cas-là pour les luttes, mais dis moi quand est-ce que les gens ils se rencontrent dans une société ?

⁴²³ Such as in her performance at the festival *Origines Contrôlées* or in her performance at the CAT, Bordeaux, both in December 2006.

⁴²⁴ From *L'esquisse* (2005).

Non mais quand ? Où ? Tu vois ? Où, c'est... parce que tu vois, « j'adore le MAP ce qui disent etc le discours », mais euh, c'est tout – c'est le public. Mais à un moment tu peux créer un espace de rencontre, après faut savoir utiliser l'espace. Le folklore tu vois c'est super, ça permet d'ouvrir. Mais c'est pas suffisant. Je pense que aujourd'hui, comme on n'a plus d'espace – la presse est complètement accaparée, complètement récupérée – [l'important] c'est d'ouvrir l'espace, dans la rue, favoriser les rencontres, les échanges, l'information, la mobilisation, on a pas le choix !⁴²⁵

Seizing all opportunities and platforms of expression, the band has been associated with a plurality of militant positions and events. Departing from a position often epitomised by observers as *altermondialiste* – a term which has become used by commentators by default for lack of a better word⁴²⁶ – supportive of José Bové,⁴²⁷ MAP was observed to play in the street at many militant events, supporting all kinds of networks and movements. At the national level, MAP sided with two political trends of the radical left – the activists gathered around Bové and the former LCR, who made the song 'Salutations révolutionnaires' (feat. Mouss & Hakim) their campaign anthem. The band also associated with other sections of the radical left through their cultural outlets, playing at the *Fête de Lutte Ouvrière* or the compelling, popular culture institution of the *Fête de l'Humanité*. MAP enjoyed playing in open-air venues, in the street or at festivals, ranging from institutions such as the *Francofolies* to smaller radical festivals such as *La Belle Rouge*, organised by the company Jolie Môme in Auvergne.⁴²⁸ After a short break, the band continued touring in 2008, in a relatively shorter tour (April-November 2008). The story of MAP, who got involved and contributed to building a tight network of cultural resistance wherein a lot militant artists know each other, can be seen as another illustration of the dynamic of cultural resistance, organised according to the connectivist logic of the network.

If the context changed after the election of Sarkozy as president in May 2007, with mobilisations becoming more localised or fragmented into sectors, throughout this two and a half years of touring, encounters and performances, the band also evolved politically, sharpening and elaborating further their activist positions and discourses. By and large, the collective became focused more keenly on certain specific concerns around the notion of domination. Due to the multicultural origins of its members, the band has also been committed to issues related to war and migration. They have been particularly mobilised internationally around the Palestinian cause, and went to Ramallah to undertake workshops and performances in the summers of 2007 and 2008. At the national or local level, they have

⁴²⁵ Interview with Saïdou Dias, Lille, 7th November 2007. See Appendix 6.

⁴²⁶ As is also the case for Keny Arkana and the radical political stance of La Rage du Peuple.

⁴²⁷ Bové is cited in two of their songs of the first album ('Donnez nous' and 'Elle est belle la France') and on their website.

⁴²⁸ See detailed account of Jolie Môme in Appendix 2.

been heavily involved in the resistance to the immigration state policy and the *Sans-Papiers* question (and ‘*Sans*’ generally), playing benefit gigs for militant organisations such as Survie, RESF and Sans-Papiers collectives, the FSQP and the MIR. Their favourite topics of participation and commitment usually revolve around the denunciation of racism, social and racial domination, and the continuation of colonialism internationally (Palestine) or nationally (supporting the revolts of November 2005 and the resistance in the *quartiers*); physical and symbolic state repression (against violence and in support of prisoners, but also against censorship and in support of freedom of expression, a claim common to a majority of rappers); capitalist commodification (of culture, but also of the human, with refugees and migrant issues). More generally MAP ‘Ministers’ take on a radically anti-nationalist, anti-fascist, anti-racist, and anti-*droite* political stance, denouncing the ‘*Sarkolonisation des esprits*’, linking dominant ideology with commodified dominant culture: ‘*comme on nous vend de la musique prémachée, préfabriquée, on nous inocule des idées pré-pensées*’.⁴²⁹ If the state as a generic enemy is targeted by most case studies,⁴³⁰ the character of Sarkozy – denounced in symbolic production (lyrics) or more political speeches – comes across as an enemy common to all our hip hop collectives (Keny Arkana, La Rumeur, MAP, Stéréotypes), echoing a general hatred of Sarkozy in the *quartiers*.⁴³¹

On the whole, it could be argued that as the band developed, their political discourse became increasingly centred around a form of identity politics, notwithstanding always remaining socially anchored in their working class roots. In that respect, issue specific campaigns may have been viewed as a way to reappropriate an enduringly denied identity, hence a way of appropriating the protean and ever more elusive notions of power and *politics*. As both lyricists explain, this departs from a re-appropriation of the first person in artistic practice, before expanding into a wider political understanding of the issue of domination:

Kaddour: Le premier besoin que tu as, quand tu viens de là, c’est de dire « je ». « Je me définis moi-même, ce n’est pas toi qui vas me définir ». Nous, on a passé notre jeunesse à voir des gens parler de nous à la télé. [...]

Saïd.: C’est une question de dignité, un sursaut d’orgueil. On est dans une société qui nie complètement l’histoire de nos parents. C’est le trou noir. Ces gens qui sont ceux qui comptent, qui sont les plus importants dans ta vie, les gens qui t’ont construit, les gens qui t’aiment, les gens qui te nourrissent, on les méprise. Et tous les gens qui te ressemblent a priori, dans ce monde, on les méprise: les Palestiniens, les Africains... On est vraiment des terroristes, des ramasse-poussière ? Quand tu te poses ces questions d’identité, tu les poses aussi en termes de lutte des classes, et de lutte tout court. Tu choisis ton camp, tu

⁴²⁹ See <http://www.map-site.fr/>

⁴³⁰ This statement could be nuanced for Moleque de Rua and Tarace Boulba who seem to tackle the state more indirectly in their discourse.

⁴³¹ See Lagrange & Oberti (2006), *op.cit.* ; Muchielli & Le Goaziou (2007), *op. cit.*, and more generally Beaud & Pialoux (2003), *op. cit.*

affirmes dans quel camp tu es. Tu t'identifies clairement, ce qui te permet aussi d'identifier clairement tes ennemis.⁴³²

Thus, if the political claim in MAP's music lied initially in both the contents of the lyrics, famous for using humour as a tool for the denunciation of injustices, as well as the buffoon theatrical strategies of exaggeration on stage, the context of their performances and the experience of the first tour became increasingly tied to their activist stance, wherein concerts were all seen as encounters and occasion to further elaborate a syncretic cultural expression always in a militant context. The attachment to Palestine for instance, translated into solidarity actions in France, blossomed fully after the band stayed for a few weeks (June 2007 and April 2008) in Palestine, where they participated in residence workshops, cultural events, and concerts (in Ramallah). The band even set up a blog to report on their travelling experience in Palestine. In those travel notes, MAP asserted their social roles as militant artists, portraying music more sharply as a prerequisite for freedom and resistance:

La musique ne craint pas de frontières ; la musique, libre, insaisissable et insolente, se permet de voyager par delà les murs et les barrières ; la musique frappe les cœurs sans leur faire aucun mal. [...] Nous sommes des musiciens, nous ne sommes que des musiciens, mais nous avons ce pouvoir de toucher les cœurs et les âmes, nous avons ce pouvoir de bousculer les consciences ; nous avons un rôle à jouer dans cette histoire et nous allons le jouer.⁴³³

From these intense experiences, the band returned with more explicitly militant songs. The second album, released in April 2009, further entrenched MAP in their position as committed artists. Incorporating explicitly activist songs featuring Palestinian musicians ('Palestine [N'har jedid]'), Keny Arkana ('Appelle moi camarade'), Mouss & Hakim ('Salutations révolutionnaires'), or short militant discourses to introduce their songs, MAP continued to develop their strategy of mockery and *détournement* as forms of denunciation and catharsis, wherein the festive aspect of artistic practice is construed as a question of survival. Just like Jolie Môme, who view theatrical practice as '*le repos du guerrier*',⁴³⁴ for MAP struggle and pleasure are perceived as two sides of the same coin of resistance:

Saïd: C'est une expression politique, mais il y a aussi une notion de plaisir. C'est aussi quelque chose d'artistique, d'esthétique, parce que c'est joli de débiter sur un rythme, de faire des freestyle. Que tu le fasses bien ou que tu ne le fasses pas bien, peu importe. Il y a un plaisir là-dedans. C'est aussi un moyen de se rassembler. Ça démystifie un peu le truc: tu n'es pas né avec les crocs et la rage jusque-là, c'est aussi un plaisir. Faire des freestyle, faire des soirées rap entre potes, dans le quartier, sous un arrêt de bus, où chacun va rapper, c'est quelque chose d'agréable.

Kaddour.: Il faut savoir jouer avec la fête et la lutte, vivre et te battre. Tu ne peux pas faire que te battre, mais tu ne peux pas passer ta vie à faire que vivre. Tu retrouves ça dans le groupe, dans les spectacles: tu as des moments où on essaie d'être festif, mais les textes sont toujours là, parce que l'époque le nécessite, que tu ne peux pas passer sous silence ce que tu vis.

⁴³² Kaddour & Saïd in interview with Pierre Tévanian, in *ibid.*

⁴³³ From MAP blog Palestine, available at: <http://www.map-site.fr/>

⁴³⁴ Interview with Michel Roger of Jolie Môme, Saint-Denis, 8th April 2006. See Appendix 6.

Saïd: C'est une question de survie... Si tu ne prends pas un peu de plaisir dans la vie, t'es foutu. Et le plaisir, faut aller le chercher aussi. Tu vas le chercher dans la musique, en rencontrant des gens... La musique ça sert aussi à ça: ça sert à faire des rencontres artistiques, ça sert à rencontrer des gens.⁴³⁵

Practice of rally vs. practice of protest?

Discourse as a paradigm of political legitimization

In the end, for all case studies, the issue of politics, and politicisation of artistic discourse or musical practice certainly returns as a recurring question, resurging within form itself – in every case in a different shape, figure, and context. In that sense, performance enables an expression of resistance through festive practice. While those expressions are diverse and idiosyncratic to each case study, two tendencies emerge as informing the festive practice, both bearing great similarity with practices of political activism: on the one hand a *practice of rally*, with collective gathering and social bonding as prime focus; and on the other hand, a *practice of protest*, searching to collectively express social discontents, often verbally but not exclusively. Those two tendencies were identified as exercising a significant impact on the case studies, although quite often, the case study oscillates between those two practices of socialisation. The nuances are situated in the significances those tendencies play for each case study in their practice, resorting to them as strategies to generate an expression of festive resistance.

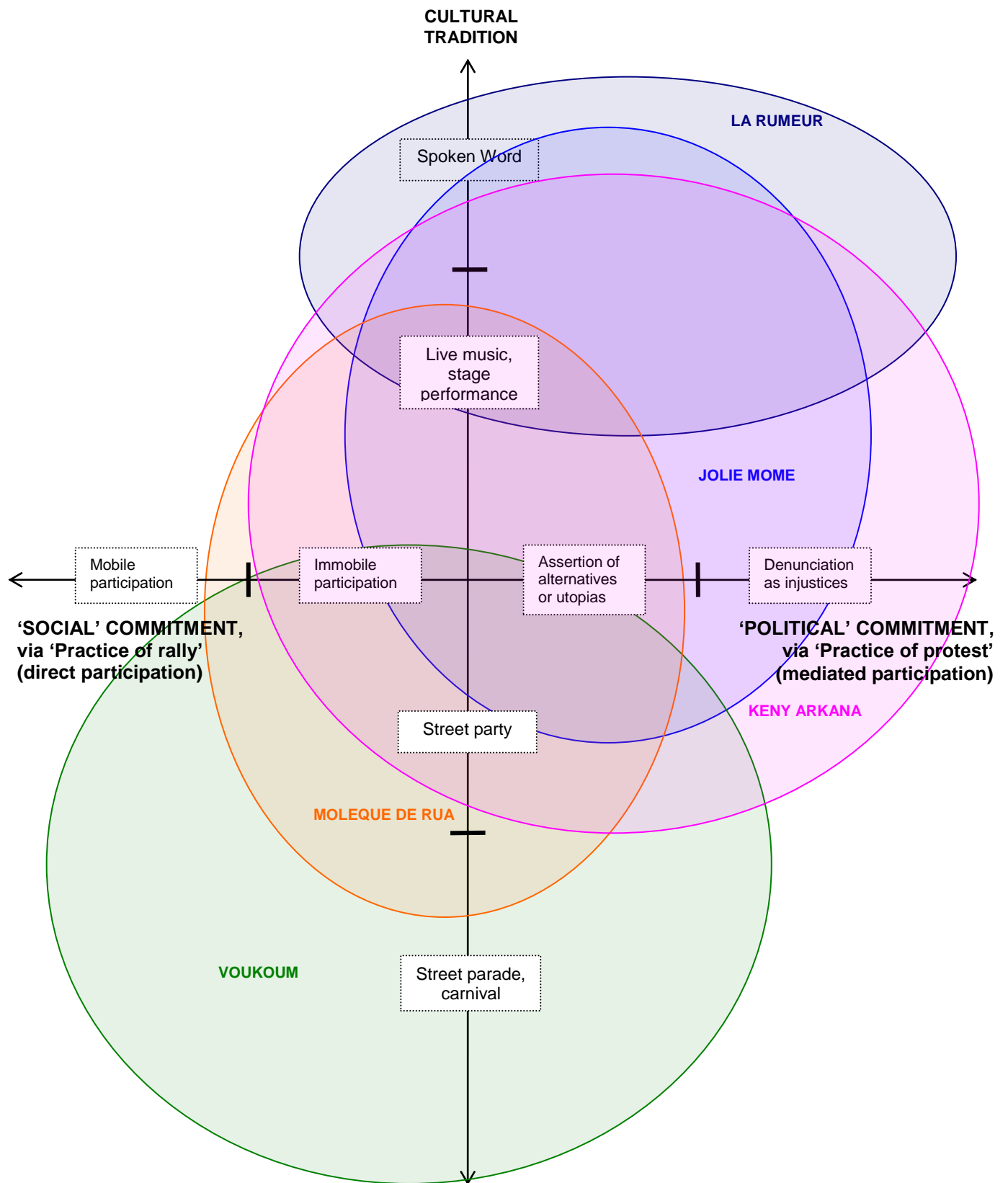
Summoning direct participation of the audience for the creation of a community, the *practice of rally* can be immobile and participatory, as in the case of attendance at live performances – usually common to all performing arts, *a fortiori* to popular music; or mobile and participatory, as in the case of Vokoum, anchored in the carnival *Creole* tradition of the *déboulé*. On the other end of the spectrum of festive resistance, the *practice of protest* features more mediated participation of the community. Generally implying a clear, explicit practice of denunciation (typically in the lyrics), this practice is pregnant for instance in the Jamaican traditions of the *spoken word* that developed in reggae and later gave rise to rap and slam. Today, this practice is more mediated by the cultural object, although the initial aim of this practice can intersect with a practice of rally. Both tendencies (practices) may present idealist features, yet the summoning of utopia tends to be more implicit in the *practice of protest*, whereas the *practice of rally* seems to concentrate on an *enactment* (however temporary and symbolic) of those utopias as the mainspring of resistance to a

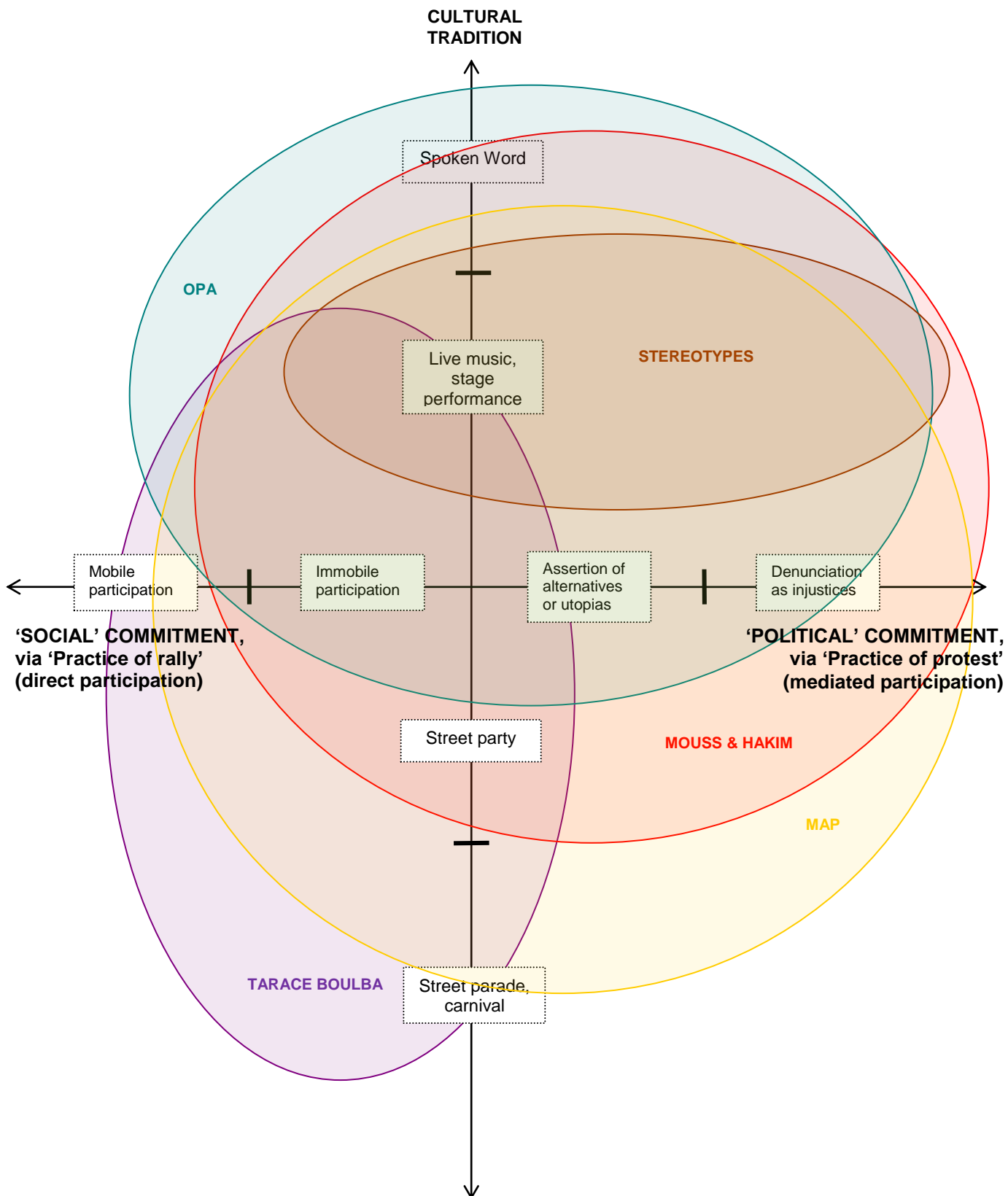
⁴³⁵ Saïd & Kaddour in interview with Pierre Tévanian, in Tévanian (2009) *ibid.*

dominant order. Hence, the different forms observed in live musical practice will resort to different strategies to convey a notion of resistance: through the reversal of a given order staged by a carnival performance, the aspiration to community and equality symbolised by an interactive live performance, the assertion of alternative social values and identities, or the denunciation of exploitation in lyrics from a song. The following figure (*Fig. 6*) endeavours to summarise how those two tendencies develop for our case studies.

Figure 6. Practice of rally or practice of protest

Cultural traditions, and practices of resistance in festive performance.





Discursive denunciations vs. alternative enactments in cultural resistance

All in all, these two practices at play in festive resistance tend to confirm, as was outlined above, that a form of political legitimation can be traced along discursive lines. Against the creation of festive TAZ and alternative social spaces, the discursive practice of political denunciation is asserted as a form of political commitment displaced on the symbolic field of aesthetic discourse. The following section shall provide a brief overview of the most common motifs of discontents found in this aestheticised discursive practice, before offering an analysis of song lyrics.

3. Discursive resistance: the motifs of discontent

The preliminary considerations established in the introduction of the chapter along with the account of festive resistance could only make us well aware of the limits of textual analysis for envisaging musical form. This section shall nevertheless take lyrics as its focus for discursive analysis, in order to establish the main claims or denunciations which steadily surface throughout the lyrics. Usually clashing with state or dominant discourse, the common topics pertaining and pervading the *corpus operum* revolved around issues of legitimacy, citizenship and social identity; discrimination and postcolonial treatment of the lower class population; and lastly collective emancipation, mobilisation or revolution. Therefore in our analysis, four major themes, were identified: freedom of expression, exclusion and participation, legitimacy and recognition, utopia and emancipation.

3.1 *The re-appropriation of speech: the claim of freedom of expression*

Expressing oneself as a primary condition of resistance against denial or indifference

Expressing oneself in front of an audience is often perceived as the initial step into finding words to form a discourse of resistance. OPA underlines how this process can make the artist at once vulnerable and powerful:

J'ai gribouillé ça pour vous, j'ai gribouillé ça pour vous
Je ne quitterai pas l'estrade sur un coup de tête
Je commencerai par me démaquiller
Peau après peau je pèlerai devant vous mon être peau après peau
Et mes mains et mes pieds
Du sol où pour la première fois je pris forme
J'ai gribouillé ça pour vous, j'ai gribouillé ça pour vous.⁴³⁶

Consequently, the artist shall come to reclaim this discourse she/he is forming as freedom of expression of one's own identity and condition. In the social context of the case studies, this process is prone to be equated to a form of resistance against the stereotypes and prejudices against the communities where the artistic collectives have their roots. Stéréotypes reclaims this expression as a form of 'verbal delinquency' to assert, and appropriate, their own identity:

Lis sur ma bouche, c'est de là que tout part, notamment mon délit d'expression
Délinquant verbal, en position, KMK t'apporte la bonne production.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ OPA, 'J'ai gribouillé', *Live Alone à l'Inca* (2007).

⁴³⁷ Stéréotypes, 'C'est de là que tout part', *Six pieds sur terre* (2007).

The theme of freedom of expression, which goes hand in hand with the development of hip hop, comes across as the most evident claim in the songs. The basis of re-appropriation of speech, freedom of expression is formulated as the initial step of a manifesto, spelling the artist's subjective vision of the world and her/his own truth:

Dis leur que c'est l'heure, dis leur que la petite marseillaise débarque
 Déballe ses rime écorchées, dis leur qu'une fois dedans je sortirai plus des bacs
 Dis leur que je me fous de la tendance et de ce que les gens disent
 Que je compte brûler leurs normes eux qui voient le rap comme une marchandise.
 Dis leur: pour foncer j'attends par leur signal, je veux pas signer,
 Qu'il y a pas de pseudo-gangsta chez moi car j'ai pas de potes chez les résignés
 Dis leur que je fermerai pas ma gueule, même dans l'adversité
 Que peu importe ce qui m'attend, ce qui m'accueille, je marcherai vers ma vérité
 Dis leur que je ne renoncerai pas, non depuis le temps que je suis dans l'ombre
 D'ailleurs je ne veux pas y bouger mais si la lumière tourne c'est de la bombe-bombe
 Dis leur que je resterai fidèle à mes rêves de môme,
 A mes convictions et à tous ceux qui ne supportent plus cette vie à Babylone
 Dis leur que je plierai pas aux exigences
 Du marché ou autre, et que je crierai ce que je pense sur nos chers bâtards de dirigeants
 Dis leur que c'est de la vérité que je compte mettre sur le tapis
 En gros dis leur que mon rap est une menace pour les règles établies.⁴³⁸

The anaphora *dis leur* recurrently points at expressing a *claim* against *them* (the system, the powerful), inviting the audience to identify with the rapper's manifesto. Saïd of MAP also acknowledged in interview that he considered 'Lillo', the first song he wrote for MAP, a form of manifesto, an assertion of his own postcolonial identity, and necessary gesture against the general perception of denial or indifference from the establishment.⁴³⁹ In the case of *rap conscient* in particular, the expression of one's own condition goes hand in hand not necessarily with politics *per se*, but at least with taking a clear stance of resistance:

Qui prétend faire du rap sans prendre position?
 Eh l'rap tes soldats s'entretuent ont perdu leur mission.⁴⁴⁰

Denouncing the co-optation and recuperation of hip hop by the cultural industry world of '*jolies paillettes*', Keny Arkana reasserts hip hop as a weapon in a social struggle, wherein the mission of hip hop is to provide a discursive outlet for representing:

La souffrance des incompris, le mal de ce monde
 Les erreurs d'un système pourri Oh oui ton rôle était noble
 La voix du peuple, la rage des minorités
 Mais aujourd'hui, seuls le style, la gloire et l'argent sont tes priorités
 N'oublie pas ton combat ! N'oublie pas ceux d'en bas !⁴⁴¹

Departing from the empirical observation of their own postcolonial condition as *banlieue* sons of migrant workers, and focusing particularly on popularising in their songs the hidden

⁴³⁸ Keny Arkana, 'Le missile est lancé', *L'Esquisse* (2005).

⁴³⁹ Interview with Saïdou Dias, Lille, 7th November 2007. See Appendix 6.

⁴⁴⁰ Keny Arkana, 'Le rap a perdu ses esprits', *L'Esquisse* (2005).

⁴⁴¹ Keny Arkana, *ibid.*

history of colonial struggles, La Rumeur endowed from the outset their artistic process with a political dimension, or at least uncompromising protest undertones in their lyrics. In that sense, the band could be regarded as involved in a form of resistance from the start, both in discursive and in practical terms. Their uncompromising lyrics were from their early days matched with an aspiration to keeping the original, non-commercial, *underground* dimension of hip hop, which they proudly reclaimed in songs or interviews, denouncing the *rap business*. Even before the release of their first LP, this *engagement* was epitomised by the track ‘Je reste underground’ a title by Sheryo featuring Ekoué recorded in 2001 as a response to a track by IAM’s MC Akhénaton dismissing the rappers (generally based in Paris) resisting the co-optation (or popularisation) of hip hop as a form of snobbishness, and a veiled attack of La Rumeur’s refusal to let their songs be broadcast on Skyrock radio.⁴⁴² In 1994, the second edition of IAM’s second album *Ombre est Lumière*, already included a bonus track called ‘Reste underground’, tackling the issue of marketisation and commodification of hip hop.⁴⁴³ It seems that from the early 1990s, as hip hop developed in France an opposition can already be found between two visions of hip hop, one, defended by IAM (amongst others), contending that aspiring to a wider audience did not mean commodifying hip hop, the other, defended by La Rumeur (amongst others featuring Assassin, Less du Neuf, Anfalsh, Scred Connexion...) arguing for an autonomy, or a limited control over production and circulation of hip hop, aspiring primarily to keep hip hop outside the realm of commodification.

*Social oppression, discursive expression, state repression:
the political dimension of hip hop*

As already mentioned above, the history of French hip hop is peppered with cases of prosecution, usually for libelling either the police (with NTM and Ministère A.M.E.R. in the mid-1990s remaining the most famous cases), or the French state itself (with Sniper’s case).⁴⁴⁴ Therefore from the outset, the claim of freedom of expression took on a particular, political dimension. Expression alone becomes in that sense a political stake in and for itself.

Je suis sous pression mon expression est un délit en voie de suppression
Mon impression est que ma passion, entrave à ton information,
Sans sommation, on bande on cache,
C’est soumission ou bien cache-cache

⁴⁴² ‘Je reste underground’ is a B-side of Sheryo’s EP *Le salaire de la galère* (2001). The song incriminated by Sheryo and Ekoué, called ‘C’est ça mon frère’, can be found on Akhenaton’s second solo album *Sol Invictus* (2001).

⁴⁴³ See IAM, *Ombre est Lumière* (1994).

⁴⁴⁴ See account of those trials narrated in Introduction.

Ici personne se couche tout le monde est libre mais ferme sa bouche c'est louche
 Accouche paroles sur table d'écoute pendant que l'arnouche en font leur compte,
 Pourtant ya pas mort d'homme dans ce que j'écris tout ce que je raconte.
 Lyrics ou graffitis c'est gravissime alors je fais gaffe ici,
 Je contourne les interdits face à la majorité des indécis,
 C'est indécent parce que l'on dit ce qu'on ressent
 On est incandescent aux yeux des gens condescendants
 Donc ils appliquent les conditions:
 Quatre mois ferme pour une insulte, et on te traite toujours d'inculte
 C'est ta liberté qu'on ampute et tes pensées que l'on inculpe.⁴⁴⁵

Stérotypes refers here to the most famous case of libel, which was also the only known case of appeal until La Rumeur's legal case: in 1997, NTM had to go to the Cour d'Appel and Joey Starr was condemned to a heavy fine of 50,000 FF and a two months prison sentence.

'*Liberté d'expression*' is the claim which eventually led La Rumeur to endure the trial they had to face over eight years (2002-2010). Throughout their long legal struggle the band made a conscious choice to politicise this claim, particularly as the subject of libel was about historical unrecognised evidence of racist police crimes. In the process, their artistic expression became even more politicised than it was before. In *Regain de tension* (2004), La Rumeur clearly portrayed hip hop expression as a weapon to wage war upon those who want to silence them.

Issu des circuits clandestins et de quelques milieux opaques, parfumé au nitrate, obstiné devant l'obstacle, enfant de l'asphalte dont on n'écoute que les déflagrations, te fais la guerre sans aucune déclaration. Toujours debout malgré les coups, trou de balle, quand le tout répressif choisit ses plus belles balles, je suis cette peur ancestrale dans leur jeu cérébral, furieux dans la diaspora et que comprene qui pourra.
 A nous le bruit et ses effractions en série, son sous-sol, ses clés d'acier et ses clefs de sol.
 A nous le bruit et ses effractions en série.⁴⁴⁶

Merging war imagery with the urban trope of the *cit*é ('*asphalte*') in a poetic appropriation of a commonplace metaphor in hip hop, Philippe compares their artistic practice to a clandestine activity of terrorists (or freedom fighters?) preparing bombs and Molotov cocktails, and ready to face their enemies in a riot:

La Rumeur, groupe qui milite depuis le début [...], né prédateur d'accord, presque toujours isolé mais jamais muselé [...] Et puis passe moi l'étoffe, la bouteille et l'essence, que je te montre comment ces enculés se balancent dans tous les sens. A l'aide de textes très crus dans son placard, bâtard, c'est La Rumeur en extrait qui t'insulte exprès. La haine se lit dans les traits et t'annonce un sale futur, et pour les traîtres des points de suture.⁴⁴⁷

Asserting their will to resist censorship and repression, Ekoué verbally turns freedom of expression demand into a claim to the legitimacy of self-defence:

⁴⁴⁵ Stéréotypes, 'C'est de là que tout part', *Six pieds sur terre* (2007).

⁴⁴⁶ La Rumeur, 'A nous le bruit', *Regain de Tension* (2004).

⁴⁴⁷ La Rumeur, 'Nous sommes les premiers sur...', *Regain de Tension* (2004). Burning explosives and weapons to wage a guerrilla are recurrent images throughout La Rumeur's songs, would be too long to insert all here. On the latest album (*Du coeur à l'outrage*, 2007), see 'Comme de l'uranium', 'En vente libre', 'Qui ça étonne encore', 'Du sommeil, du soleil, de l'oseille'.

Plus ils nous emprisonnent, plus je leur emprisonnerai la vie, heureux dans mon cliché, moins ils nous cautionnent plus ils vont en chier man, verront qui est le kissman. J'aurai toujours mon mot à dire, je vais pas te mentir, et même s'il faut que je te marche dessus. [...] Ce sont les mots qui me viennent, que l'on accuse à tort d'inciter à la haine.⁴⁴⁸

La Rumeur resorts to hyperbole, exaggerating the stigma of *racaille*, *voyou*, or *bande ethnique* – all terms used by Sarkozy in 2007 to qualify *banlieue* youth – in order to revert the stigma and reclaim it as a political identity of resistance:

Je suis une bande ethnique à moi tout seul
C'est écrit sur ma gueule
Voyou, barbare, intégriste, casseur, terroriste, salopard, sauvageon
Est-ce que le compte est bon ?
[...] Je suis une bande ethnique à moi tout seul
Regarde ! C'est écrit sur ma gueule.
Un cordon sanitaire dressé autour de mon CV
Et ouais, il y a d'quoi s'énerver.⁴⁴⁹

Conscious of the significance of words, Hamé offers his insight into the mechanism of symbolic violence used to perpetrate a neo-colonial ideology fuelled with racism, inequalities and alienation summed up in the chiasmus 'Maître mot et mots du maître':

Maître mot et mots du maître, maître mot à suivre à la lettre
Ordre des mots et mots de l'ordre, ordre des mots dressés pour mordre
Ces mots dans le barillet des sécurités qui retrouvent ma trace et ouvrent la chasse
Ces mots sans sommation, sans scrupule ni regret,
Ces mots à te faire peur, ces mots à te faire taire
Ces mots qui regardent ailleurs quand Habib est tué à terre,
Le 9 bis pour tout drap mortuaire
Ces mots qui ont dans la poche un juge et une quinte floche,
Ces mots qui ont dans l'œil la poutre d'une guerre sans deuil.
Souvenirs au cri du temps béni des colonies,
Pour peu qu'on gratte, pour peu qu'on se batte, pour peu qu'ils craquent
Ces mots quoiqu'on y fasse qui refont toujours surface,
Ces mots, ces coups, ces coupables désignés,
Ces Mohamed, ces moricauds, ces mauvaises bêtes à mauvaises peaux
Ces mots morts que je porte si bien qu'ils collent à mon ADN,
Ces mots que je porte si loin qu'ils en deviennent des chaînes.⁴⁵⁰

3.2 Political exclusion and social participation

One of the most prominent dimensions of the artists' political and social engagement, and which can be found in all texts and lyrics, is the denunciation of social injustice, oppression and exclusion. This denunciation focuses on the experience of political repression and on the assertion of a right to political inclusion. While some of the artists put a strong emphasis on police violence and abuse, namely the *physical* dimension of repression, others tend to uphold their right to difference and recognition of their identities, in an attempt to claim a

⁴⁴⁸ La Rumeur, 'Les mots qui me viennent', *Regain de Tension* (2004).

⁴⁴⁹ La Rumeur, 'Je suis une bande ethnique à moi tout seul', *Du cœur à l'outrage* (2007).

⁴⁵⁰ La Rumeur, 'Maître mot, mots du maître', *Regain de tension* (2004).

place within society. This place is one that they carve through the very practice of resistance to the domination of the physical, ideological, and symbolic repression perpetrated by the state apparatus.⁴⁵¹

In 'La meilleure des polices', La Rumeur brings together both dimensions: they denounce the omnipresence of repression and control, suggesting that the oppressive apparatus of the state is not confined to its physical official manifestation:

La meilleure des polices ne porte pas l'uniforme
Double, triple, trouble, incolore, informe.
Elle s'immisce en tout, se mêle de tout, se ressent partout
Central, sans bruit, sans rien d'écrit,
Sans aucun parfum de la moindre gâchette, parfois même avec des talents de poète. [...]
La meilleure des polices chasse sur les terres du paradis sur terre qu'elle vend clé en main,
Ou connaît le moyen de te procurer l'envie de rien
La peur de tout, l'effroi de la joie, l'angoisse du chagrin.⁴⁵²

Instead, the most potent repression is invisible: it is through manufactured consent and ideological shackles that the oppressed are maintained in their position and internalize their condition:

La meilleure des polices, c'est tout ce qui te fait marcher droit, avec ton propre consentement, sans jamais montrer les crocs, quand bien même on te propose de t'enculer. La meilleure des polices, c'est ce qu'on apprend de mieux du berceau au tombeau.⁴⁵³

Consequently, the first moment of resistance, before any physical or practical action, must be the very exposing of the symbolical and immaterial imprisonment of the oppressed subject: the text itself becomes resistance – '*sans rien d'écrit, sans aucun parfum de la moindre gâchette*' – as the consciousness it brings opens up the possibility of rejecting alienation. The interjection '*ton taf, ta télé*' identifies the interlocutors as belonging to the oppressed. The reference to familiar life habits and the use of the second person create a feeling of complicity and shared condition between the rappers and their audience, while at the same time reversing the exclusion this time toward those in power, whom the rapper clearly does not address in these lines:

La meilleure des polices c'est ton taf, ta télé, tes crédits, tes anxiolitiques, neuroléptiques, antidépresseurs.
Et tout ce que tu prends pour pleurer moins fort la nuit.
La meilleure des polices, c'est tes sourires forcés, c'est tes retenues sur salaire
Et le découvert avant la fin de la semaine.
C'est la peur de faire un pas, puis deux, puis trois;
Parce qu'enfant, on t'as dit que t'étais une merde et que t'as fini par le croire.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ See Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence discussed above, in Chapter I.

⁴⁵² La Rumeur, 'La meilleure des polices', *Du cœur à l'outrage* (2007).

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The aesthetic of the beat, dark and haunting, rhythmically enacts resistance to the elusive fabric of power and domination. Its corrosive, almost sweltering, quality contributes to awakening a sense of anger and resentment towards the omnipresent repression denounced in the lyrics. The insistent looped sample, the particularly low-pitched bass and the sharp recurring beat mimic the reckless sound of visceral oppression: '*Elle s'imisse en tout. Se mêle de tout. Se ressent partout*'. Against this stifling background is set the clear and determined vocal track as the voice of resistance, shouting louder than the poisonous rhythm of the *instru*:

La meilleure des polices c'est tout ce qu'on t'prends tout ce qu'on t'laisse,
 Tout ce qu'on tue en toi, tout ce qu'on t'mâche, tout ce qu'on t'crache.
 Tout ce que tu bectes pour garder le goût
 De moisir à crédit dans un putain de trou.⁴⁵⁵

The anger and aggressive reaction against the invisible hand of oppression lying at the heart of the musical practice itself, is viewed in the positive terms of a salutary question of survival. Again, artistic expression is posited here as a privileged outlet to formulate resistance against the brutal, dehumanizing violence which this internalised form of policing inflicts on the soul of the oppressed.

Denouncing is equally central to Jolie Môme's approach, though it comes together with demands for political inclusion through struggle and resistance, an option absent from La Rumeur's texts. The form suggests the possibility of coexistence of repression and resistance, which conveys a sense of optimism and the hope for a happier future. The festive and celebratory dimension of the songs reflects this positivity and simultaneously seeks to rally people to the struggle. For example, 'La semaine sanglante', a cover of a traditional Commune revolutionary song, opens with the denunciation of repression in the first three verses; it then moves on to exposing the threat of the situation evolving towards a police state in the following two; but, in the last verse, it eventually calls on all to join the struggle for rights and justice, and for the establishment of a real Republic:

A quand enfin la République
 De la justice et du travail?⁴⁵⁶

Demands formulated in Jolie Môme's lyrics include justice, freedom, dignity but also collective land ownership rights and the advent of socialism. The band both calls for the effective re-appropriation of inaptly applied rights and articulates revolutionary claims, which go beyond the existing political framework. In 'Marcos', Jolie Môme evokes '*le vent*

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁶ Jolie Môme, 'La semaine sanglante', *Jolie Môme* (1998).

d'en bas', a metaphorical representation of the aspirations and claims of the oppressed, and opposes it to the reality of the capitalist system, '*le vent d'en haut*'. The dual aspect of oppression as both a material and ideological subjugation is mirrored in the demands of the oppressed – '*le vent d'en bas*':

Et puis, il y a le vent d'en bas
Celui qui naît dans le Cœur indien des montagnes, celui qu'écoute la plupart, les millions!
Ceux qui ne se laissent pas décourager par le désespoir et le conformisme.
Et bien ce vent là, il parle de justice, de liberté, du socialisme, de l'Espoir...
Il communique au monde entier
La parole des insurgés
Qui exigent la dignité
Au nom de tous les opprimés
On entend chanter Zapata
Qui dit que le jour viendra
Où la terre appartiendra
A celui qui la travaillera
Parce qu'on la collectivisera.⁴⁵⁷

Repression, represented as *le vent d'en haut*, is what silences people's aspirations and seeks to curb their rebellion. In a similar fashion to its description in *La Rumeur*, repression combines a material and an ideological dimension and is closely associated with the state. In 'Marcos', it is both *le vent d'en haut* and its physical embodiment that represses:

Faisant souffler le vent d'en haut
Celui qui fait courber le dos
Qui contrôle la rébellion
Avec ses bombes et ses avions.⁴⁵⁸

Social exclusion from the rights defined within the existing system is also denounced: inclusion within those boundaries is thus demanded and the possibility of it is enacted through struggle and resistance. For example, in 'Exiger un toit', Jolie Môme uses the founding terminology of the French Republic as set out by the motto *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* to show their insufficiency in the current social order and radically reclaim them:

Pas de liberté sans égalité sans fraternité
La démocratie de la bourgeoisie, c'est celle du mépris.⁴⁵⁹

More broadly, the demand of rights through the struggle is seen as the weapon of the oppressed. In 'On va *Droits Devant!!*', it is through the very fight and the identity it calls into existence that rights can be reclaimed and eventually fulfilled. The title of the song features a pun on words with *droit* meaning both 'straight ahead' and 'rights' as well as a

⁴⁵⁷ Jolie Môme, 'Marcos', *Jolie Môme* (1998).

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁹ Jolie Môme, 'Exiger un toit', *Rouge Horizon* (1999).

reference to the grassroots campaign group *Droits Devant*, fighting for equality of rights, against exclusion, particularly active on housing and eviction issues.⁴⁶⁰

A similar process of identity claiming can also be found in the lyrics of MAP. In this instance, however, it is not the identity of struggle as such but the process through which an identity is reappropriated and reclaimed that possesses revolutionary potential. Thus members of MAP uphold the right to belong to Northern France working class identity for oppressed migrant workers. Thus in 'Lillo', they sing:

Ch'uis un Lillo, un vrai de vrai, mon salaud
Un cht'i un chabert un bourrin un prolo
Et alors, et alors, et alors?? Un vrai!!!
Un vrai de vrai mon ch'nord!!⁴⁶¹

Through the use of a slang vocabulary characteristic of the working class of northern France, MAP reclaims this local identity as theirs, despite and against racist prejudices that have excluded migrant workers and their descents from it. Moreover, the use of repetitions resonates as an interpellation, a call for acceptance. The determined and insistent rhythm contributes to the power of this claim. In reality, MAP are not so much asking for acceptance as unquestionably asserting their identity and belonging. Moreover, through the denunciation of the racialization of migrant workers and the call for working class unity in resistance, MAP also reveals the racist character of state repression:

Je vais pas t'faire l'apologie de mon code postal
Le fier cul ou l'chauvin a deux balles
Dans ce pays où on me rappelle que je ne suis pas chez moi
Ici j'ai mes repères, ma famille et c'est déjà ça
Alors je fais avec ce que j'ai même si ça me fait chier.⁴⁶²

The main agent of repression, as already seen in *La Rumeur* and *Jolie Môme*, is the state apparatus and its institutions:

Une police nationale qui nous prend pour des cobayes
Police municipale qui s'prennent pour des cow-boys
Contrôles abusifs, expulsions des sans papiers.⁴⁶³

This denunciation is however much more specific and localised than in 'La meilleure des polices' and in *Jolie Môme*'s texts: MAP takes as starting point their personal experience of oppression in Lille and Roubaix (northern France) and then extends it to a more general criticism and denunciation of state racism and repression. MAP initially articulate their struggle in a specific physical location and assert their right to existence and belonging

⁴⁶⁰ See <http://www.droitsdevant.org/>

⁴⁶¹ MAP, 'Lillo', *Debout Là D'dans* (2006).

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*

locally, but they subsequently derive a far-reaching revolutionary message, calling for unity and solidarity across the board in opposition to capitalist and statist repression. This indignation is at the root of their political stance, shaping and sharpening their activist position, as become more audible in the more militant album *Les bronzés font du ch'ti*, featuring denunciations of deportation of migrants ('La chasse est ouverte'), celebration of Palestinian resistance ('Palestine [N'har Jedid]'), and calls to political mobilisation ('A l'abordage', 'Un air de révolution').⁴⁶⁴ After 'Lillo', a manifesto asserting the complexity of postcolonial identity, 'Appelle moi camarade', sung with Keny Arkana, can be seen as a manifesto of the postcolonial militant:

Combattant, résistant, militant indomptable
 Insurgé, insoumis, rebelle infatigable
 Esprit libre, vagabond ou nomade
 Si tu penses que le monde est crade
 Appelle moi camarade !⁴⁶⁵

3.3 Legitimacy and recognition: discriminations and the postcolonial legacy

In truth, one of the central themes in the lyrics of our artists revolves around the issues of legitimacy and recognition. With a particular focus on colonial and postcolonial legacy, the texts often aim at rewriting history from an alternative angle. Turning personal anecdotes (hip hop) and local stories (*chanson*) into a cultural history of oppression, the essential aspiration of artists and their entourage often lies in (re-)appropriating social and political recognition and gaining collective legitimacy through the cultural medium.

Emerging as a rather unique, previously unheard voice on the cultural landscape of France, the discourse La Rumeur brought to the fore, particularly at their beginnings, seems to be clearly emerging from this aspiration to reclaiming the repressed, unrecognised, or denied side of history from the point of view of the colonial oppressed. A few tracks on La Rumeur's trilogy of EPs gained attention from a still limited yet wider public, notably the song 'Blessé dans mon ego' (by Ekoué), relating the uncomfortable feeling of belonging neither *ici* nor *là-bas* for so-called *second generation* immigrants of Subsaharan African descent, 'On m'a demandé d'oublier' (by Hamé), evoking the violent repression of colonial liberation struggle in the Algerian war and the direct affiliation found in the institutional racism against postcolonial communities victims of police violence and racist crimes, or 'Champs de cannes à Paname' (by Le Bavar), recounting the consequences of colonization

⁴⁶⁴ See MAP, *Les bronzés font du ch'ti* (Pias, 2009).

⁴⁶⁵ MAP, 'Appelle moi camarade', *Les bronzés font du ch'ti* (Pias, 2009).

on Parisian youth of Caribbean (*Antillais*) origin.⁴⁶⁶ It should be noted that from the onset of the band, knowledge (both empirical and scholarly) has always been perceived as a key to emancipation, hence an essential realm of struggle. All members have always shown a particular interest in history revisited from the subjective angle of their own postcolonial condition, and valued the battle for the re-appropriation of scholarly knowledge – typically promoting the untold history from the angle of resistance.

Similarly, in ‘Jolie colonie’, *Stéréotypes* revisit colonial history presenting racism and fascism as central elements of French society and history, thereby acknowledging the experience of the oppressed and the colonized:

L’histoire, je ne peux la refaire, le couloir de la mort agrandit son décor
Assure son ascension sur l’Ouest lointain, le génocide des indiens....⁴⁶⁷

Challenging the borders of the French state and of official history, the lyrics replace the postcolonial communities in France within the wider historical context of oppression and colonization, and claim their unity as victims of these practices: ‘*Renoi, rebeu, toubab, chnaow, tchek et j’en passe [...] arawak, tomahawk*’.⁴⁶⁸ This shared history is also linked to images of lost land and freedom: ‘*l’Ouest lointain*’, ‘*lac, plaine lointaine*’.⁴⁶⁹ The lyrics of ‘Jolie colonie’ not only claim for a recognition of the colonial past, but furthermore argue that it is the condition to concretely conduct an anti-racism and anti-fascism struggle:

Je monte mon association
Celle-ci est fondée sur la non discrimination mais attention
Souviens-toi de ma nation bafouée.⁴⁷⁰

By positioning itself at the forefront of this initiative of correcting the dominant historical narrative, *Stéréotypes* makes a claim for justice through reviving silenced memory and thus engages in the deconstructing of the myth of French identity and reveals its exclusionary and essentially racist nature. After the first verse, interpreted by a Black character (Mista), the second verse of the song is written from the point of view of a white French national (Konic) who rearticulates his national identity by incorporating a recognition of the oppressive past of the French nation into the official narrative. He frames this claim within the fight for the right to freedom of speech, which he presents as a weapon to challenge dominant history,

⁴⁶⁶ See La Rumeur, *1er volet: Le poison d’avril* (Fuas, 1997), *2ème volet: Le franc-tireur* (Fuas, 1998), *3ème volet: Le Bavar et le Paria* (Fuas, 1999).

⁴⁶⁷ *Stéréotypes*, ‘Jolie colonie’, *Six pieds sur terre* (2006).

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

thereby positioning himself within the anti-fascist and anti-racist struggles. This postcolonial narrative is that which allows unity in the struggle:

100 % français c'est pas une insulte, simplement un fait, je viens d'un peuple qui a parqué, décimé des populations entières, fier je ne le suis nullement, lucide je le reste assurément, anti-facho le premier commandement de ma religion pour l'union, la liberté d'expression, droits sacrés à ne jamais remettre en question.⁴⁷¹

Colonial and postcolonial history seems in fact to be at the root and the very *raison d'être* of Voukoum. The reference to colonial history is omnipresent in their musical production, as far as in their choice to use the Creole language, a product of the colonial influence of French on West African native languages of slaves during colonialism. The rhythms and percussions used in the songs recall those of West Africa, shading light on yet another dimension to the story of resistance, as these musical traditions were forbidden under colonialism yet practiced defiantly by those colonized or enslaved.⁴⁷² Certain songs are specifically about colonialism and the continuous oppression of the colonized, and bring to the fore the relations of power and the modes of resistance, establishing a strong parallel between colonial times and postcolonial France. This also amounts to a denunciation of the authoritarian process of integration in contemporary French society, and reveals that formally equal citizenry has not erased the inequality, dispossession and exploitation of colonial times.

The song 'Kolon la' deals specifically with this subject, taking the core values of the French Republic and challenging the colonizers regarding the hypocrisy of their discourse in relation to the reality of life for the inhabitants of Guadeloupe:

Yo alé mwen de libeté, de égalité
Yo menmdi mwen fraternité
Men es tou sa vwé
Se sa o di, men es tou sa se vwé.⁴⁷³

The song also holds the colonizer to account, evoking the reality of colonialism for populations who were displaced because of slavery, declaring that *decolonization* was another victory for the colonizers as no justice was done to the colonized:

Départeman ouve koloni femé
Woulo woulo ay woulo woulo
Ekspatriasyon san konsiderasyon
Fe eve neg bitasyon neg a la nasyon abolisyon...
Kolon la kriyé woulo.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷² See Berrian (2000), *op. cit.*

⁴⁷³ Voukoum, 'Kolon-la', *An Lari-la/ Trans-la* (1999).

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

3.4 Utopia and newtopia: musical practice as social emancipation

Finally, one of the essential themes underlying our selection of lyrics is the tautological self-reflexive treatment of musical practice itself, often portrayed as one of the keys to social emancipation and to enable the reactivation of utopian ideals.

C'est à nous aujourd'hui de savoir occuper l'espace public: la rue elle est à nous !
Les gouvernements et les partis politiques de l'extrême gauche jusqu'à l'extrême droite ne nous donneront pas cette parole et c'est à nous de savoir comment faire entendre notre voix
Il faut pas se battre avec leurs outils à eux parce que c'est eux qui les ont inventé c'est leurs règles du jeu c'est eux qui les maîtrisent, et si tu veux être sûr de perdre à un jeu, joue avec celui qui a inventé la règle [...] on a besoin de créer de nouvelles choses
Entre partis et syndicats trop de militants ont trouvé leur opium.⁴⁷⁵

In this extract, Keny Arkana claims that resistance movements should be autonomous from established political organisations, such as political parties and unions, which she compares to a drug and in fact calls the 'opium' of the militants, in a fashion reminiscent of Marx's contending that religion is the opium of the people. Trade unions and political parties for Keny Arkana play the role Marx attributes to religion, namely a form of alienation necessary for people to endure the misery of daily life but also allowing them to reject responsibility for their own destinies onto the divinity. In Keny Arkana's case, the bureaucratic apparatus of militant mass organisations is the main element to blame. To her it only a machine generating false hopes and illusions, wherein people are given an outlet to feel they are resisting the misery of their daily lives as exploited workers. Keny Arkana's musical process is part of a journey towards new ways of resisting and allows her to express her needs for alternative forms of organisation and struggles. In this track, she asserts that only by coming together in the street, far from organised forms of mobilisation and in the way in which hip hop was originally created, that true resistance can take shape. It is in this act of emancipation through the reclaiming of public spaces, that a space outside the system can be created and that both her musical practice and her political engagement can take roots.

Taking this trend yet further, Tarace Boulba do not only put their lyrics and musical practice to the service of opening up a space for the conception of utopias, they also produce instrumental effects with the purpose of carrying the audience into new realms of connecting to each other, through sensations rather than words. The festive and humorous nature of the lyrics, often mixing vulgarity with lyricism and poetry, also serves to ridicule the status quo: this mockery makes it possible to leave reality behind and travel with the audience into a collective chaotic dreamland, both as a form of emancipation and catharsis:

Libère ton esprit, laisse tes fesses t'emmener

⁴⁷⁵ Keny Arkana, 'Alterlude: le changement viendra d'en bas', *Désobéissance* (2008).

Tu n'es plus sur Terre, oui tu as décollé, ça y est !
 Alors vide ta tête de tous les médias
 Qui te détournent des faits
 Vide ta tête de tous les médias.⁴⁷⁶

The music itself brings people together in the process of liberation and emancipation from the ideological state apparatus, as opposed to simply denouncing it. Music in itself becomes here a form of transcendence to be shared collectively.

This is all the more the case in the instance of Moleque de Rua. Self-produced and released in 1988, their first album summarises five years of practice in the community, rehearsals, music instrument building, performances, collective creation workshops in the neighbourhood, which transpire in the energy of the band's music and the tone of the lyrics: not just a tough, caustic and aggressive denunciation of injustices, decrying poverty, corruption and violence, but primarily an assertion of the positive values of friendship, solidarity, independence, freedom, rooted in utopia. The band's lyrics, practice and example stood as a celebration of the community's ability to reclaim their cultural legacy and reappropriate their lives, taking their future into their own hands and allowing creativity to play a part in their representation of the world. In that respect, the pejorative social – and more often than not racial – connotations attached to the *favela* origin is again turned around to assert the freedom of the artist, transcending her/his own condition in art, becoming stripped off any negative stigma through musical practice. In that sense, from their early days, Moleque de Rua have assertively construed culture as a tool for building autonomy and freedom, and revert a situation of *oppression* into an *expression* of identity, aspirations and dreams, using the poetry of the everyday, and transcending the banal into the wonderful. Culture can become empowering insofar as it enables a change of point of view, reverting the gaze collectively, hence generating an active process and transformative dynamic of emancipation. Arguably, this is also where the inherently political dimension of their self-management practice lies. According to Jacques Pasquier of Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue, '[p]our [Moleque], l'auto-gestion n'est pas un but politique mais la mécanique de leur émancipation'.⁴⁷⁷ This logic of self-management would remain one of the collective's major concerns all throughout their development, as a collective practice of internal direct democracy featuring equalitarian participation and consensus in the decision-making process.

⁴⁷⁶ Tarace Boulba, 'Vide ta tête', *Une fois encore* (2000).

⁴⁷⁷ 'Présentation de Moleque de Rua' in *Note d'intention 2006*, internal archives collected at Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue's main base in Le Mans in 2006-2007.

In the end, OPA summarises the role art may play in triggering utopias and emancipation. For OPA, '*l'oeuvre d'art a cette singularité qu'elle appartient à un et à tous en même temps*'.⁴⁷⁸ The work of art is posited here as primary refusal of oppression or simple re-appropriation of public speech. In that respect, the notion of *resistance* can be understood in a fluid variety of modalities, enabling a syncretic form of expression of a struggle, in artistic as well as political terms.

⁴⁷⁸ 'Myriam Erckert, une graine lumineuse' interview by Franca Maï in March 2006 for the webzine *Sistoeurs*, in *OPA webreview*.

Conclusion. Symbolic emancipation through autonomy

Following an account of the idiosyncratic features and common characteristics found in our selected acts (III) and an analysis of the politicization process at play in musical practice, coming into different forms of cultural resistance (IV, V), the following two chapters (VI, VII) shall take a step back to situate the case studies in their day-to-day struggle for appropriation. Notwithstanding the modalities shaping alternative musical production, instances concentrating power and authority over symbolic production are considered not only as major impediments for *counterculture* to flourish, but also the very *raison d'être* of the latter. This process of domination is mostly located in the material supremacy of the market on the one hand and the state on the other, both exercising economic, ideological, and ultimately political control over cultural production. More specifically, the realms of music business and state cultural policy, both determining funding and facilitating visibility, could be identified as the two major fields of struggle against co-optation the case studies have to face.

Yet in their attempt to build figures of cultural resistance, the case studies are confronted to their own limits and contradictions. While the ideal of autonomy *vis-à-vis* all structures of authority has been observed to emerge as a consistent aspiration for the case studies insofar as it is envisioned as a social horizon of emancipation from oppression, a closer analysis of the relations of production may show this autonomy can hardly ever be envisaged in absolute terms. The process of cultural resistance in grassroots musical production is therefore difficult to pin down systematically, since the strategies differ in each specific context. To grasp a better understanding of the dynamics of emancipation through cultural practice, an analysis of the relation case studies have to the market and state institutions is particularly revealing. While in both cases, strategic choices revolving around the contrasting notions of absolute autonomy vs. subversion of heteronomy confront the ideal of emancipation to its own contradictions, ranging from radical refusal to more pragmatic compromise, the practice of autonomy takes different shapes depending on the framework of struggle. The following set of chapters shall undertake to analyze the modalities of this process. Grounded in a materialist approach, our analysis shall deliberately focus on economic mechanisms and funding constraints the case studies are confronted by within their daily practice, shaping their relation to the market and the state.

Chapter VI.

None of your business? Market constraints and the decommodification ideal

1. Dependency vs. autonomy: subversion vs. isolation of music production

- 1.1 Subversion of economic heteronomy as politicisation of culture?
- 1.2 Economic autonomy as political separation?
- 1.3 Access and visibility: the weight of music industries in distribution

2. Alternative distribution strategies:

makeshift economies and emancipation from commodity fetishism

- 2.1 Artisanal distribution: guerrilla capitalism vs. Copy Left
- 2.2 Activist grassroots networks: alternative target markets or emerging cultures of solidarity?
- 2.3 Musical live performance as an anticapitalist space of authenticity

Conclusion. Economic autonomy as a political dialectic

*‘Oui oui j’ai signé chez Because, non mais Because, c’est un indépendant, c’est un bon petit label, et puis je fais pas ça pour la thune...’.*⁴⁷⁹ Here, Keny Arkana summarises the material contradictions all artists have to face when confronted with strategic choices for producing a record. Record production concentrates those contradictions because what it takes to produce a record concerns all artists, but there is an inescapable political dimension to it, which comes to the foreground in the very process of musical production. In fact, the multiple constraints implied in the material production of a record concentrate tensions to such an extent that they reveal a blatant overlapping of economic and political powers. In other words, if record production appears at first sight as a mere economic procedure, all case studies reveal faultlines: strategic decisions which politicize the artists in the production process. Economic pressures reach a point where they become political, so in the tensions and alternative market strategies deployed, the latent political control that was an implicit, *misrecognised* (Bourdieu) power relation, becomes explicit in the conflict that it generates.

Both in their practices and their lyrics, most artistic collectives strongly denounce the domination of a powerful minority, and warn against the dangers of *recuperation*. Keny Arkana inscribes her artistic practice in the framework of a resistance to cultural incorporation:

Dis-leur que mon rap est un appel à résister
Dis-leur que j'appartiens qu'à mes idées
Irrécupérable c'est plus que décidé.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ Retranscription of informal discussions with Keny Arkana, Spring 2007.

⁴⁸⁰ Keny Arkana, 'Le missile suit sa lancée', in *Entre ciment et belle étoile* (Because, 2006).

La Rumeur also famously denounces the cultural monopoly of the French radio *Skyrock* over French hip hop, and the way the radio contributes to the deradicalisation and commercial transformation of French hip hop. A private radio created in 1986 by Pierre Bellanger, Skyrock decided to take a radical shift in 1996, to invest in the emerging target market of ‘urban music’. In the landscape of dominant media businesses, the radio was the first to invest in this field, a risk that turned out highly profitable for the radio, to such an extent that by 1998, Skyrock was the first hip hop radio in the world.⁴⁸¹ This is why the most famous slogan of this promotion campaign – still in use on the radio today – remains ‘*Skyrock, premiers sur le rap*’. Radically opposed to Skyrock’s approach, La Rumeur not only refused to be broadcast on the radio but also subverted the Skyrock slogan ‘*premiers sur le rap*’ into an uncompromising song, a radical call to purge hip hop of all traitors, a clear allusion to the radio:

Nous sommes les premiers sur le rap, fils de pute!
 Cette poignée de non-alignés qui commencera par buter
 Rappeurs, DJs et producteurs zélés
 Regardant le ciel s'assombrir au-dessus de leur tête de traître.⁴⁸²

While all our selected artists inscribe their practice into a logic of emancipation against financial dependency, this aspiration to autonomy, seen as a form of cultural resistance, can take different forms, and implies different strategies for the artists that can turn into paradoxical antinomies. When confronted by the powerful market constraints of the music industry, the ambition to economic autonomy of musical practice primarily conveys an anticapitalist aspiration to *decommodification*.

In the end, two myths – the utopian aspiration to autonomy and the dystopian fear of co-optation – structure the contradictions of the record production process. This tension between autonomy and co-optation calls for an empirical exploration of the strategies resorted to by our artists to resist market constraints in music production and distribution. Before embarking on a more concrete analysis of musical production for our bands, a brief reminder of terminology regarding different uses of the word ‘production’ could be useful at this stage. The record industry is divided into four separate processes: studio recording (artistic production); technical manufacturing, or pressing (industrial production); promotion and publishing; and distribution. Hence, when applied to the field of music industries, the term ‘production’ may refer to three notions: artistic production; more rarely industrial

⁴⁸¹ See Chiappa, Christophe (2000), ‘Du flow au cash-flow’, in *Art Press*, hors série *Territoires du hip-hop*, pp 36-41.

⁴⁸² La Rumeur, ‘Nous sommes les premiers sur le rap’, included in bonus CD (CD2 *-Inédits*) added during reedition of LP *L'ombre sur la mesure* (EMI, 2003).

production; most commonly, it will designate the global process of creation and manufacturing of the record, encompassing recording, fabrication/manufacturing and publishing, leaving out the distribution stage, seen as a separate process of the overall industry. It will generally be used in the latter sense in the subsequent pages, unless otherwise specified.

The following pages will assess to what extent alternative market strategies could provide a form of emancipation from commodity fetishism. First, a comparative account will be given of the strategies resorted to resist the heteronomy of global cultural industries by four different scenarios (MAP, MR, LR, JM) in music *production* of cultural commodities. Can the existence of smaller record companies, which build their ethos of *independence* and marketing strategies against the economic dominant model, be a sufficient enterprise to contribute to a form of ‘economic resistance’ to the domination of *majors*? Secondly, the analysis will explore music *distribution*. Concentrating on three case studies (JM, ST, OPA) offering alternative strategies of diffusion and distribution, it aims to assess the scope of autonomy and ultimately, the political significance of economic resistance in grassroots musical practice.

1. Dependency vs. autonomy: subversion vs. isolation of music production

Musical practices inscribed in a logic of cultural resistance usually react against the *inauthenticity* of *superstardom*. If most of the artistic collectives studied do not aim for maximising profit, the insecurity of financial conditions meant that some of them chose to diversify or manage their own activity. The highly economic insecurity or at least the precarious practising conditions and unpredictable financial results, along with the profitability threshold of a record – estimated by the Snep at around 100,000 copies for the production of one record – are economic and ideological incentives for artists to seek autonomy.⁴⁸³ The profitability threshold affect both record companies, who lose their investment under that threshold (but typically this planned risk is compensated by other sales), and artists, who given the time invested to produce a record, only start to break even and actually earn extra salary with their royalties only above this threshold. In practice though, the record company ‘lends’ money to the artists as a form of payment, an investment that will need to be secured a return through sales. In terms of alternatives to the overwhelming domination of the ‘Big Four’,⁴⁸⁴ there are mainly two types of scenarios: remain within the existing realm of supplying facilities in terms of music production, but subvert the oligopoly of *majors* by turning to smaller record companies, more widely called *independent labels*, or refuse any form of corporate heteronomy or mediation by systematically seeking autonomy in all stages of production. Here again, a reminder on terminology on the word ‘label’ could be useful at this stage. In everyday language, the term *label* has been increasingly used as a metonymy for the record company itself. Usually preceded by the adjective ‘independent’, it will be used here designate smaller record companies.

Throughout this process, these two tendencies seem to ultimately affect and conversely be shaped by increasingly sharper political views. Thus, however indirectly and on a limited scope, instances of musical resistance progressively become inscribed in the realm of a form of activism. They are gradually confronted by the necessity of taking a political stand on the heteronomy of the market in their daily cultural practice. We shall now look at four case studies and examine the strengths, limits, and contradictions facing the artists in their musical production strategies, endowing them with a sense of a politicised relation to the industry. The first two collectives (MAP, Moleque de Rua) haven chosen to work with independent labels – although, interestingly enough, Moleque de Rua have had different

⁴⁸³ Cited in Curien & Moreau (2006), *ibid.*, p 43.

⁴⁸⁴ Namely, Universal Music, Warner Music, Sony-BMG, and EMI. See Chapter II.

approaches to the music industry throughout their history. The last two cases (La Rumeur, Jolie Môme) have sought far more autonomy, trying to secure the best possible level of autonomy of production.

1.1 Subversion of economic heteronomy as politicisation of culture?

MAP: the mediation of small or independent infrastructures

Opting for a local independent label for artistic production – Booster, a small label based in Lille – MAP turned to a bigger infrastructure for the industrial production and distribution of their first record. For their first album, *Debout là-d'dans* (Pias, 2006), the band opted to keep away from the majors, but signed a contract with Pias, one of the biggest independent record companies. Benefiting from the infrastructure of Pias enabled MAP to gain access to a less confidential and local audience than the one they had when they started, hence contributing to the significant commercial success of their first album, equally acclaimed by critics and a heterogeneous audience coming from different musical traditions. The second album *Les bronzés font du ch'ti* (Pias, 2009) was recorded in the same conditions, with Booster and Pias, and commercially confirmed MAP had developed a steady, regular audience all over France. In interview, Saïd justified their strategy by a choice to keep their artistic practice – and therefore the human relations within the collective – as decommodified as possible:

[Q]: *Et du coup, vous allez essayer d'avoir une autonomie économique ou... ?*

[A]: Ouais, ouais moi, j'en rêve. C'est hyper compliqué pour nous parce qu'on sait pas faire - vraiment quoi. Et c'est tellement d'enjeux... d'enjeux humains entre nous que finalement on se dit... Ah mais nous on sait pas le faire quoi, moi je sais pas le faire, aujourd'hui je peux pas être leader d'un groupe, et en même temps être le patron, enfin financier, c'est un truc de fou. Nous c'est une bombe atomique dans le groupe, si ya de l'argent qui est en jeu et tout ça c'est... tu vois, tu te rends compte le rapport humain ça devient des rapports de fric. Oui toi t'as telle part de marché telle part de marché, parce que c'est ça. C'est quelque chose que nous, on sait pas faire quoi. Avoir aujourd'hui des postures d'*associés*, tu vois, on fait de la musique, des postures d'*associés*, business, chantage et tout. Bon on sait qu'on a des managers tout ça, ce qui sert à vendre les disques sur les concerts, et à vendre les T-shirts et tout ça, sur lesquels on fait quasi pas de marge et tout ça, mais en tournée ya quand même des excédents. Mais nous, on met même pas notre nez là-dedans quoi, moi je sais pas faire quoi. Je sais pas faire parce que je trouve qu'il y a trop d'enjeux...

[...] Après moi je suis content aujourd'hui d'être dans un label indépendant, tu vois, à taille humaine. Tu vois c'est ça qui est intéressant aussi. Tu vois notre label indépendant, il fait pas de singles, tu vois le manager, c'est un anar, je veux dire on se comprend quand on papote quoi.⁴⁸⁵

Moleque de Rua: A history of mixed strategies aiming at independence of production

The history of Moleque de Rua displays a slightly less straightforward and linear approach. In 1988, Moleque de Rua released their first single and their first music video. The band also

⁴⁸⁵ Interview with Saïdou Dias, Lille, 7th November 2007. See Appendix 6.

decided to compile their songs on a first album, all self-produced, published and distributed. The single and the video drew the attention of Columbia records – label incorporated in the bigger *major* Sony – with whom the band agreed to sign a contract for their first LP. *Moleque de Rua*, released in 1991, the band's first record available in regular music outlets all over Brazil, suddenly endowed the band with a lot more visibility, making them a national phenomenon.

The encounter with Jacques Pasquier in 1992 at the first Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro provided the collective with an opportunity to re-organise their musical production, and their overall approach to their work. The following year, in 1993, Pasquier mobilised his networks to organise the first European tour for the band, and started to look for an infrastructure for them to produce a second album in the independent circuit. Eventually, in 1995, Moleque de Rua continued their process of independence vis-à-vis big music industries. Shying away from Columbia and Sony Brazil, they released their second album, *Street Kids of Brazil*, produced by Pasquier through the emerging structure Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue (set up by Pasquier and Duda), and published by an independent label (Crammed). The LP produced a significant echo in Europe, to the point that it even reached number one on the 'World Music Charts Europe' in 1996. Initiated in 1993, and pursued every year ever since, the band continued touring in Europe, and to develop ever closer links with France.

Yet as it progressed, the band never gave up on its aspiration to more autonomy. In 2004, the partnership Moleque de Rua – Gamins de l'Art-Rue decided to take their development further, and formally institute a structure for artistic production, setting up the associative network and label Créer C Résister, hence securing partial autonomy for the overall production. The label produced the two most recent albums of Moleque, *Final Feliz* (2004) and *Utopia Agora* (2007), published by the independent label Naïve.

Faultlines and contradictions:

subversion as a political approach to economic heteronomy

With their experience of working with independent record companies, both MAP and Moleque de Rua have chosen to remain within a conventional framework of the record market. Providing them with a relative level of visibility, economic heteronomy has also confronted them to contradictions and limited their ambitions to a decommodified approach to cultural practice. However both collectives have found different ways of subverting this pragmatic framework for pushing towards their initial goals. By setting up residence-workshops, Moleque de Rua have consistently aimed at developing collective autonomous

zones of social empowerment through musical practice, hence willingly or not generating an indirect politicisation of cultural practice. Equally, by regarding visibility as a mere platform, and keeping a significant focus of their practice on live performance as a moment of collective, unmediated sharing with an audience, MAP have managed to remain clearly inscribed in a politicised, and even explicitly militant approach to culture.

Thus, the album *Moleque de Rua* recorded with Sony in 1991 could be seen as a springboard to success for the band. Yet with success came potential and possibilities, but the band also experienced problems and frustrations. The *major* gave the band visibility but Duda felt the risk of co-optation looming over the horizon of perspectives. Caught in contradictions, Duda decided to resist what at the time was perceived as a potential *dérive* for the band. In particular, the idea that *Moleque* could be perceived as, and participate in what he understood as mere marketing disguised as charity infuriated Duda, and contributed to clarify the band's approach to musical practice as far as their relation to capitalist production was concerned. It led them to take uncompromising positions regarding the music industry, and on the long-term, radicalised their discourse to assert their self-management ideal. Thus on the following album, recorded on an independent label (*Crammed*, 1995), the tone of the lyrics still asserted the utopias which had initially informed their writing, but it also carried a more radical offensive against commodification, political correctness, and charity business.

Over the years, far from abandoning the *moleque* spirit,⁴⁸⁶ the band has continued to create instruments, and develop local cultural practice on an international scale, through the semi-nomadic form of the residence-workshop tour. Anchored in a tradition of popular education, *Moleque de Rua* have tried to develop autonomy as much as possible, in covering all the stages of music making, ranging from music instrument making to artistic production, from training and learning to the exchange and transmission of practices and traditions through workshops, always with a social perspective:

Par leur mode d'intervention innovant, ils ont été à la base du dispositif de la politique de la ville sur les résidences d'artistes. Ils revendiquent un projet artistique d'utilité sociale et sont la partie émergente d'une structure qui englobe des centaines d'enfants de la favela. Proposant une musique chaude, festive et originale, leurs concerts sont aussi forts que leurs prestations en atelier, où ils reproduisent dans le quartier concerné les activités qu'ils mènent à la favela.⁴⁸⁷

For MAP, the political stance in their approach to music is far more clear-cut, and is reflected in the relation they have to economic heteronomy. Like most of our musical

⁴⁸⁶ '*Moleque*' means 'streetkid, street urchin' in Portuguese. See Appendix 2 for detailed description of *Moleque de Rua*.

⁴⁸⁷ In *Note d'intention 2006*, internal archives collected at Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue's main base in Le Mans in 2006-2007.

collectives, MAP has distinctly favoured live performance to studio recording or media appearances. Following the release of their first album in 2006, MAP's first tour, featuring more than 150 dates envisaged every concert as an opportunity for encounter, exchange, and expression. Shortlisted to represent France for Eurovision 2007 with their single 'Grain d'sel', the participation in the contest was approached by MAP with the same mindset: '*C'était assez surprenant, pas une mauvaise surprise d'ailleurs, mais c'est une autre dimension du « populaire »: la volonté de toucher le plus grand nombre*'.⁴⁸⁸ The band clearly justified their choice as a conscious gesture:

Très simplement, on est allé là-bas faire notre musique, celle qu'on défend sur scène et sur disque: cette musique artisanale, cette musique de prolo, cette musique métissée, épicée... A l'image d'une France colorée, à l'heure où les discours et attitudes racistes se banalisent. Nous avons vu cette invitation comme une tribune; et la possibilité de partager notre vision de la musique et de la société à un plus grand nombre. Nous pensons avoir exprimé les choses clairement lors de notre passage, tout comme cela a été l'occasion pour nous de faire monter nos potes sur scène, dont certains manifestants intermittents (même si les caméras semblent les avoir sciemment ignorés). Pour info, cette montée sur scène inopinée nous a valu d'être « trocard ». Nos potes ont été « molestés » par les agents de sécurité de l'émission et jetés comme des mal propres... et donc il semble bien que ces messieurs de France TV n'ont pas l'intention de nous réinviter de sitôt !!! Pour les plus sceptiques, réécoutez les paroles de la chanson « grain d'sel » qui sont explicites, sans détours et ne souffrent d'aucune ambiguïté quand à l'objet de notre passage télévisé dans cette émission de merde (nous vous le confirmons).⁴⁸⁹

The disappointing outcome of this experience contributed to further politicise MAP in their cultural practice. If the band always seemed inscribed in the *artistic critique* (Boltanski & Chiapello) trend of anti-capitalist discourse, coming across in their lyrics and discourse as critical of the commodification of culture and in search of authenticity,⁴⁹⁰ this confrontation with the corporate media triggered a form of radicalisation of their discourse against domination as the band aspired towards more autonomy of production:

Saïd.: Ma position, maintenant, c'est de boycotter ces espaces, les espaces dominants. Je préfère qu'on crée nos propres espaces, des sites Internet, des radios, des petites salles... Ces espaces créent des rapports de force. [...] Je n'ai pas envie de m'agiter dans leurs espaces, je préfère encore créer mon propre espace, quelque chose qui m'appartienne. Il faut être clair, il faut être audible.⁴⁹¹

Beyond those questions, two collectives, Jolie Môme and La Rumeur, have opted for autonomy in all aspects of the process.

⁴⁸⁸ Tévanian (2009), *ibid.*

⁴⁸⁹ From 'communiqués ministériels' on MAP site: <http://www.map-site.fr/>

⁴⁹⁰ For instance, as evoked on the song 'Les bronzés font du ch'ti' (*Les bronzés font du ch'ti*, 2009), or on their website, the band clearly supports free downloading (illegal or not) of their music as a gesture against the logic of commodification. See <http://www.map-site.fr/>

⁴⁹¹ Saïd in interview with Pierre Tévanian, in Tévanian (2009), *ibid.*

1.2 *Economic autonomy as political separation?*

Jolie Môme: music production as an autonomously run process, emerging organically

Although Jolie Môme is first and foremost a theatre company, musical practice has always had a significant place, not only in their theatrical productions, but also in the tradition they have established of busking in the streets of Paris on Sundays. Music has been part and parcel of Jolie Môme's cultural production, and particularly used as an alternative form of information, circulation of ideas, and transmission of a revolutionary tradition. For instance, in 2005, the company set up a tour around France to play mainly in militant meetings the song 'Le mouton noir', which became an anthem of the campaign for the No vote on the referendum about the EU constitution.⁴⁹²

The different *cabarets* set up regularly by the company since 1996 served as a basis for record production. In 1998, Jolie Môme recorded its first album, based on the *Cabaret Rouge*, self-produced and recorded in a small studio in Saint-Amand-Roche-Savine. The Auvergne village, where the company now holds an annual festival called *La Belle Rouge*, facilitated by the communist mayor, would henceforth become a favourite spot for the company to record the following four albums (in 1999, 2001, 2003, and 2007). Thus for the company, musical production could be said to emerge organically as part and parcel of their unconventional theatre practice. This diversification of activity, an additional although financially negligible source of revenue, is also a way for Jolie Môme to literally keep a *record* of their own history of militant musical theatre.

La Rumeur: economic autonomy and the imposed politicisation of artistic expression

Notwithstanding their *underground* approach to hip hop, after the release on an independent label (Fuas) of their first three records, a trilogy of EPs, La Rumeur encountered big record company attention and obtained a contract with the *major* EMI, seen by the band as a springboard to access a wider audience. On 29th April 2002, the band released *L'ombre sur la mesure* between the two rounds of the presidential election. Shaped by their revolt at the commodification and co-optation of hip hop by big businesses and media (Skyrock radio, Vivendi-Universal, etc), La Rumeur wanted to remain both conscious and cautious in their relation with EMI. For the first album, the band imposed specific conditions to the *major*,

⁴⁹² See video track for 'Le mouton noir', found at: <http://www.cie-joliemome.org/spip.php?article84>

particularly in terms of diffusion, which in the end accelerated latent tensions. As Hamé recalled:

Notre premier album on l'a signé chez une major, EMI, on avait signé un contrat d'artistes. [...] Alors quand tu es en contrat d'artiste dans une maison de disques, elle est censée tout t'apporter sur un plateau et toi tu es censé te contenter de faire l'artiste, entrer en studio, répondre aux interviews... [...] On se sentait super à l'étroit, étouffés, et on a jamais caché notre conception des choses. [...] Mais] on avait aussi envie de bénéficier de la force de vente et de l'infrastructure d'une grosse maison de disques pour donner plus d'impact, de présence, de visibilité... [...] Le prix à payer, c'était faire tout et n'importe quoi, faire du *single*, avoir une démarche consumériste au possible. Au préalable, avant la signature du contrat, on s'est mis d'accord avec le patron de la boîte, donc ils nous ont signé en connaissance de cause. On leur avait déjà dit qu'aller tapiner chez Skyrock, c'était hors de question. [...] Nous on a jamais été en deal avec Skyrock, on aurait pu, on a refusé. Des gens pensent que notre posture anti-Skyrock se nourrit d'aigreur, de jalousie, alors que c'est tout l'inverse. Faut savoir que dès le moment où tu signes un contrat avec une major, dans le rap, c'est [le matraquage Skyrock] quasi-systématique, on te le propose, parce que [...] il y a de l'argent derrière. Et [...] on savait que cette radio est un des plus gros formateurs, transformateurs de la musique rap avec toutes ses aspérités en pop et en variété. La puissance de formatage de cette radio était un prix qu'on a toujours refusé de payer, on l'a jamais voulu et on l'a jamais fait. [On a jamais] dealé avec ces gens-là. On a préféré explorer des voies alternatives pour faire connaître notre musique, notamment la scène, un magazine qu'on a entièrement rédigé nous-mêmes, des ateliers d'écriture, et nos disques, le bouche à oreille, la crédibilité, Internet.⁴⁹³

If EMI viewed this spirit of autonomy and initiative as a potential market niche, the radical critical stance of La Rumeur within the framework of a *major* soon became too controversial for the record company, starting with the Skyrock boycotting strategy, and escalating with the beginning of the legal struggle against the Ministry of the Interior only a few months after the release of their first album in July 2002. The rapid deterioration of the relationship between La Rumeur and their record company heralded an imposed form of politicisation of their musical practice, whereby the band aspired to more autonomy. In 2004, La Rumeur kept only a distribution contract with EMI and set up their own label, an Limited Liability Company (LLC) entitled La Rumeur Records. Their first release, the self-produced EP *P.O.R.C. (Pourquoi On Resterait Calme?)* (La Rumeur Records, 2004),⁴⁹⁴ was to be followed shortly after by their second album, *Regain de Tension* (La Rumeur Records, 2004), produced in very difficult technical, moral and financial conditions. Hamé estimated that notwithstanding the time consuming procedure, the cost for the trial defence must amount to around 20,000 €, '*des fonds qu'on aurait pu investir pour sortir d'autres albums, produire d'autres artistes*'.⁴⁹⁵ For all the records to follow since then (*Du coeur à l'outrage* LP, 2007, *1997-2007: les inédits*, compilation, 2007), all processes of music production (artistic production, industrial manufacturing, promotion and publishing) were covered by the band itself through the economic framework of La Rumeur Records.

⁴⁹³ Interview with Mohamed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé), Paris, 18th June 2006. See Appendix 6.

⁴⁹⁴ The song 'P.O.R.C. (Pourquoi On Resterait Calme?)' was republished on *Regain de Tension*.

⁴⁹⁵ Hamé in *ibid.*

Economic autonomy as political separation?

Repression, radicalisation and politicisation of musical production

The evolution of La Rumeur's approach to musical practice, and their increasing appropriation of autonomy of economic production is in fact a spectacular case of radicalisation and ultimately, politicisation of cultural practice in the face of repression. Indeed, their development on the margins of, and against the framework of the hip hop establishment in France did not occur without frictions, obstacles, and political *prises de position*. As the band analysed retrospectively, La Rumeur had to face a repressive crescendo of *three acts of censorship* emerging from three ever bigger circles or authorities: the French hip hop milieu and its dominant figures,⁴⁹⁶ the media sphere with the monopolistic figure of Skyrock dominating the hip hop industry, and the state.⁴⁹⁷

In 2002, the band required from EMI to self-manage the promotion of their album. They refused to promote their album on Skyrock, and notably used the allocated budget to produce a fanzine, called *La Rumeur magazine*, to be distributed with the album on its purchase. The magazine was designed to tackle '*l'univers de La Rumeur*' and cover the band's cultural and social interests, ranging from other artists on the US or French hip hop scene to film or TV series, featuring their keen concern in colonial history and postcolonial matters.⁴⁹⁸ Despite this non-conventional form of promotion and the Skyrock boycott strategy, the first album sold over 40,000 copies (as many as the three EPs of the trilogy together), confirming La Rumeur as a significant actor in the landscape of French hip hop, appreciated for their unique approach.

Yet, it could be argued that despite (or even because of) this commercial success, the economically dominant structures in the hip hop industry contributed to economically and artistically marginalise an artistic collective seen as overly critical of the industry in their lyrics as well as musical practice. Hence, around the time of release of the first album, the radio station Skyrock contacted the band to offer them the opportunity to come onto *Planète Rap*, a radio programme considered an authority in the genre as it had amongst the biggest numbers in terms of audience out of all hip hop programmes. Instead of honouring this

⁴⁹⁶ See for instance clash with Akhenaton in 2001 and the Sheryo track 'Je reste underground', evoked above in Chapter V. Clashes in hip hop are a common practice, and this tentative of censorship can be interpreted as a very mundane case and ordinary form of symbolic domination within a sub-cultural realm where violence, emulation and competition are somewhat part and parcel of the practice, and would probably have stayed unmentioned or anecdotal if it had not been followed by a more serious form of escalation.

⁴⁹⁷ Interview for *Gasface* in 2002, in *ibid*.

⁴⁹⁸ Hamé in *ibid*.

submissive gesture of consecration for the band, La Rumeur, consistent in their positions to boycott the radio station, refused to come. In what could be interpreted as a vengeful authority gesture to remind La Rumeur that the radio station was in command of the *rap français* industry and its diffusion, Skyrock attempted to prosecute them, for an article by Ekoué published in *La Rumeur magazine* entitled ‘*Ne sortez plus sans votre gilet pare-balles*’, filing a complaint against the band for incitement to hatred and violence. The complaint was deemed inadmissible and the case was dropped. However, according to La Rumeur the radio station did not stop at that, and drew the attention of Sarkozy on an article by Hamé featuring in the same magazine, entitled ‘*Insécurité sous la plume d’un barbare*’, denouncing police violence and racist crimes, and more specifically, attracting attention to the ignored Paris massacre of 1961, as well as to the high number of police abuse, including ‘accidental’ killings of young *banlieue* French males of North African or Afro-Caribbean descent.⁴⁹⁹ In July 2002, the Ministry of the Interior filed a legal complaint against the band for libelling the police (‘*diffamation publique envers la police nationale*’).

Faced with those attacks, instead of taking refuge into a low profile, La Rumeur persisted in their claim to freedom of expression and denunciation, radicalising their discourse. In 2003, what has since become an emblematic track, responded to Skyrock’s assault by a scathing attack on *rap français*. Simultaneous denunciation and high-jacking of the radio’s slogan, ‘*Nous sommes les premiers sur le rap*’ resorts to the extended metaphor of weaponry to assert resistance, clearly pointing to the escalating repression orchestrated by the radio:

Les couilles sur la table des négociations
 Avec les autres trouduc que les playlists des radios en transformé en eunuque
 Ce fut écrit noir sur blanc pédale: ne sortez plus sans votre gilet pare-balles !
 Plus rancunier qu’une rumeur tu meurs.
 Combien de mecs se défroquent pour passer sur Skyrock ?
 C’est une bien triste époque qui commence pour vous
 Désormais la parole sera à des groupes comme nous.⁵⁰⁰

On *Regain de Tension* (La Rumeur Records, 2004), a few tracks (particularly ‘P.O.R.C’ and ‘Inscrivez greffier’) featured clear allusions to the legal struggle the band had to endure. With the overall escalation of repression – a trial for libelling is unique on such a scale in the whole of French hip hop history – the band became perceived as epitomising the diffuse anger in the *quartiers* against the much hated figures of Sarkozy and the police. Thus, it

⁴⁹⁹ At the time (2002), Sarkozy was state secretary and Minister of the Interior under the first Raffarin government.

⁵⁰⁰ ‘*Nous sommes les premiers sur le rap*’, initial release on *Nous sommes les premiers...* (EMI, 2003), EP, released as a bonus series of B-sides on the second edition of the album *L’ombre sur la mesure* (EMI, 2003). Also present on the second album *Regain de tension* (La Rumeur records, 2004).

could be argued that the politicisation of La Rumeur's musical practice emerged dialectically against the escalation of repression. More recently, the band has tried to keep on the struggle on both the artistic and the political fronts, merging them in their approach to their practice. As they started to produce other artists on their label, or incorporate other artists on their own productions, the band expanded their artistic processes and connected with other networks and forms of cultural resistance on the hip hop scene of *rap conscient*, and in the practice of *musique engagée* more generally.

1.3 Access and visibility: the weight of music industries in distribution

All in all, these different production strategies all present limits, but of a different nature. If in 1988 the first record of Moleque de Rua was self-produced, the collective saw in a contract with Sony (a 'major' company) an opportunity to develop and expand, which means the following productions were done through independent record companies. La Rumeur used the same strategy, relying on the logistical potential of EMI to make enough money in order to set up their own record label, *La Rumeur Records* (LLC), a limited company which still has a distribution contract with EMI but ensures the totality of the production and promotion process. The accession to financial independence has meant that La Rumeur members receive a much higher percentage of what they produce, with a ratio of 70 % for the artist and 30% for the distribution company, as opposed to 10% / 90% in the former contract. However, renouncing the huge promotional machinery that EMI can display but that La Rumeur members radically reject – particularly the radio Skyrock as mentioned above – also meant that the band had become marginalised, only accessible to an audience of insiders (*initiés*). The cases of MAP and Keny Arkana tend to be the most common scenarios found in musical practice aiming at decommodification, whereby resorting to the infrastructure of an independent record label is clearly a compromise between a *DIY* ethos of initiative (typical of hip hop culture), and a springboard granting more visibility and access to a wider audience.

In the end, different strategies have been adopted by our artists. To those who stand against compromise, autonomy is valued as the ultimate cornerstone of resistance. In most interviews and in some cases, in the lyrics (Keny Arkana, Voukoum), artists of the ten case studies have expressed a desire for autonomy of production, seen as a necessary criterion for absolute freedom of expression. However, most of them, with the notable exception of La Rumeur and Jolie Môme, have chosen to rely when possible on an *independent* label. This in itself is already breaking the myth of autonomy, and it seems that the self-produced records

are rarely a choice for artists, as the example of Moleque de Rua show. To Saïd of MAP, if contracting with an independent record company is an acceptable compromise for the production stage, this opposition between autonomy and dependency on the distribution networks of independent labels is sterile, because in practice, it comes down to working within the same networks, only with a different approach:

Mais finalement, même quand tu deviens indépendant, autonome, t'utilises les mêmes réseaux que les maisons de disques, c'est la tchatche. Tu sais tous les groupes indépendants tout ça c'est pilonné pour eux, parce que tu réutilises les mêmes réseaux, tu réutilises les mêmes attachés de presse, tu réutilises les mêmes stratégies les mêmes techniques. Après c'est sûr que c'est pas clair parce que t'as... t'as pas le temps, tu vois, ça coûte trop cher quoi. Mais moi tu vois, j'en rêve de ça...⁵⁰¹

⁵⁰¹ Interview with Saïdou Dias, Lille, 7th November 2007. See Appendix 6.

2. Alternative distribution strategies:

makeshift economies and emancipation from fetishism

We will now examine the alternative market strategies resorted to by some of our artists in terms of record distribution. Is absolute economic autonomy a realistic project in an economic landscape characterised by an intricate inter-penetration between media, communication and music production? To what extent can the cultural object be ridden of its fetish character? To what extent can the strategies deployed by artistic collectives to circumvent the weight of music industries in distribution contribute to generate an alternative, decommodified conception of musical practice, or even, a mainspring of emancipation?

2.1 Artisanal distribution: guerrilla capitalism vs. Copy Left

Jolie Môme and Stéréotypes: DIY distribution as local economic autonomy

Amongst our case studies three collectives (Jolie Môme, Stéréotypes, OPA) have chosen to self-organise their distribution, all in different contexts, and relying on different strategies. As discussed above, for Jolie Môme, the production of albums (LPs) – or cultural objects – is a side activity of a theatre company who have always incorporated music at the heart of their creations. The company has deliberately chosen to control and manage most of the distribution process. The conditions of distribution observed during fieldwork seemed quite artisanal, taking place mainly during performances – at *La Belle Etoile*, in festivals, or during street busking performances. Equally artisanal is the distribution of the albums of Stéréotypes, distributed by the artists during the band's performances or at militant events featuring live music, and more scarcely, in local record shops, cultural centres and hip hop specialist outlets. It should be noted that ultimately, this process tends to target certain specific audiences, most often rooted locally.

OPA: Creative Commons & free download strategy as struggle against commodification

With their improvisational aspect favouring overwhelmingly live performance, the collective recorded their first LP live in January 2007, and have since self-produced fourteen other LPs, opting for the same method of live recording every time, and never resorting to studio recording. Inscribed in a logic of *gift economy* and in a fierce struggle against the commodification of cultural expression, the collective, all unpaid volunteers, aspire to reducing as much as possible the mediation of money in their cultural practice. The band has

hence published all their albums under a Creative Commons license and uploaded their songs on their website, authorising free downloading, use, and distribution of their artistic production.

The legal basis of what has since been labelled *Copy Left* – in that it is opposed to the principle of intellectual property, but also because it tends to be an idea emerging from the political left – the Creative Commons license allows the licensee to ‘reproduce, distribute, communicate and modify’ her/his creations to the public, according to the following terms:

Creative Commons is a non-profit corporation dedicated to making it easier for people to share and build upon the work of others, consistent with the rules of copyright. We provide free licenses and other legal tools to mark creative work with the freedom the creator wants it to carry, so others can share, remix, use commercially, or any combination thereof.⁵⁰²

A legal framework designed to provide alternatives to the constraints of private intellectual property, the Creative Commons license is a device allowing the licensee to legally share – ‘copy, distribute and transmit’ – and remix (or ‘adapt’) the work, providing that the licensee is registered with a Creative Commons license and that the work is attributed ‘in the manner specified by the author or licensor’. This framework hence aims to create a community of people registered with the Creative Commons license sharing and remixing works of licensors freely, and as specified in the legal code, not necessarily ‘in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work’.⁵⁰³

The Creative Commons framework is a remarkable framework insofar as it enables horizontal communication and to some extent, fosters the idea of a communal e-democracy of cultural practices and creative processes. This strikingly stands as a collectivist conception and alternative to the privatisation of culture in the neoliberal age, with its bandwagon of flourishing ‘creative industries’.⁵⁰⁴ Interestingly enough, the framework is flexible, offering six different types of contracts to those who choose to publish their work with a Creative Commons license. This diversity of licenses endows the framework with a gradual palette of alternatives to copyright, allegedly creating a model adapted to the different situations and designs of licensees. Thus it could be argued to oppose incorporation under its own terms. The six different contracts available are:

(i) the **Attribution** license, which ‘lets others distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon your work, even commercially, as long as they credit you for the original creation’. Most

⁵⁰² Extracts from Creative Commons legal code, found at:

<http://www.creativecommons.org/>

⁵⁰³ *ibid.*

⁵⁰⁴ See Wu (2002), *op. cit.* & Stallabrass (2004), *op. cit.*

accommodating license, it gives a lot of freedom and flexibility to others (for better and worse) in terms of what they can do with the licensor's work under the Attribution license.

(ii) the **Attribution Share Alike** license, which 'lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your work even for commercial reasons, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms'. Less innovative, this license is very similar to the open source software licenses. The freedom there is limited insofar as 'all new works based on yours will carry the same license, so any derivatives will also allow commercial use'.

(iii) the **Attribution No Derivatives** license, which 'allows for redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, as long as it is passed along unchanged and in whole, with credit to you'. Less flexible, this license is closer to the constraints of copyright, except it does not imply a financial transaction.

(iv) the **Attribution Non-Commercial** license, which 'lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your work non-commercially'. This license is an interesting contract since although it is clearly a legal statement against making profit from cultural production it features a possibility of progression towards commercialisation insofar as 'although the new works must also acknowledge you and be non-commercial, they don't have to license their derivative works on the same terms'.

(v) the **Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike** license, which 'lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your work non-commercially, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms'. More radical than the previous one, this license is built along the same principle as (iv), except it does not provide a space of flexibility towards commercialisation, since all the works must carry the same license. Flexibility and adaptability in the creative process is extended since 'others can download and redistribute your work just like the by-nc-nd license, but they can also translate, make remixes, and produce new stories based on your work'. Yet a non-commercial nature must underpin all steps of the creative process, cultural production and the finished product or derivatives.

(vi) the **Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives** license which 'allows others to download your works and share them with others as long as they mention you and link back to you, but they can't change them in any way or use them commercially'. Most restrictive of all licenses, this contract is merely one of redistribution, often called the 'free advertising' license. Again, as in the two previous ones, the idea of non-commercial process is clearly stated in the contract itself.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁵ All above quotes extracted from Creative Commons license descriptions, found at:

The paradoxes of artisanal distribution: economic incorporation, politicisation of practice, and collective re-appropriation of solidarity

The examples of Jolie Môme, OPA, and Stéréotypes, show that a more or less artisanal form of production and distribution is bound to require a lot more effort on behalf of the artists to generate diffusion and influence. The Internet also plays a major role in that respect, particularly with the emergence of the *My Space Music* facility, which in theory, enables artists to promote, sell, and disseminate their music in a deterritorialised fashion. But paradoxically, if resorting to these Internet facilities may give artists an impression of choice and autonomy of distribution, not only is this embedded within a telecommunication network that has become a major creative industry (as in the example of My Space, owned by Fox Interactive Media), but it also makes distribution much more random, diffuse and financially insecure for artists. Again, it could be argued that this can turn artists into managers, a phenomenon labelled by scholars as ‘guerrilla capitalism’, and that the examples of Wu-Tang Clan (in the US), who set up their own label and clothes brand or Passi and IAM (in France) illustrate.⁵⁰⁶

While this could even altogether invalidate the politicised aspect of musical production and the notion of resistance of grassroots cultural practice, the reality is more complex as shown through the interesting example of Stéréotypes. The artist Dario Anatole (a.k.a. Mista) honestly acknowledged in interview that if the initial motivation of the band was to access social recognition and status – ‘*monter, faire de la scène*’⁵⁰⁷ – and quite far away from activist concerns, the *concrete*, social conditions of the band’s emergence predispositioned them to be in solidarity with their social environment. Originating from modest or socially disadvantaged backgrounds, the members of Stéréotypes shared from their inception a passion for hip hop, which acted as a catalyst creating a sense of belonging to a cultural community with the same social background. For instance, Mista was born in French Guyana and spend a lot of his youth in foster care centres. Konic and Keys grew up in modest neighbourhoods or lower class housing projects. In that context the dimension of self-promotion which initially motivated the three MCs looks potentially ambiguous. Yet it primarily underlies a quest for social legitimacy. Set against this specific background and envisaged as a mainspring of emergence, it led the band members on the longer term to care

<http://www.creativecommons.org/>

⁵⁰⁶ See Silverstein, Paul (2002), ‘Why are we waiting to start the fire ? : French Gangsta rap and the critique of State capitalism’, in Durand, A.-P., *op. cit.*, pp 45-67, esp. pp 52-54.

⁵⁰⁷ Interview with Dario Anatole, Toulouse, 15th October 2007.

about their social *quartier* environment. As the Stéréotypes project took shape, the three friends developed collectivist values of social solidarity in the process. In that sense, it could be argued that if artisanal distribution is not totally autonomous insofar as it cannot be totally exempt from capitalist incorporation, the phenomenon may also trigger a politicisation of musical practice: set in militant contexts or within a dynamic of solidarity as an alternative to corporate cultural industries, artisanal distribution may generate a communal re-appropriation of a social capital, enhancing a collectivist approach to cultural practice.

2.2 Activist grassroots networks:

alternative target markets or emerging cultures of solidarity?

Because of the explicitly political aspect of their art, transpiring in the form (lyrics, contents, context of performance, etc), artisanal distribution for our bands tends to be quite often rooted in activist networks – a phenomenon which applies to most of our selected acts, but seems paradoxically more acute with artisanal distribution. As discussed, the self-promotion dimension of distribution may be construed in rather ambivalent terms. It can even be condemned for fuelling a utilitarian relation to grassroots communities or activist circles, who become in turn a niche or special target market. If that is the case, then it should be argued that makeshift economies are bound to only reproduce locally the capitalist relations of production and the commodification of culture. However, not only should this phenomenon be always replaced in its social and political context of practice, but it could also be considered from a reversed perspective. In other words, these makeshift economies can be regarded as tentative experiences of local cultural autonomy emerging mostly organically from musical practice. This line of argument can be supported by two main elements. First, all our artistic collectives are – to a varying and at times fluctuating degree – part and parcel of those grassroots activist circles. Thus music production and distribution should be viewed as only one aspect of a much wider social dynamic. Secondly, they also deliberately put a strong emphasis on live performance, seen as a space of reconfiguration of social relations *par excellence*. This means that cultural production only makes up for a small part of their activity.

The examples of MAP and Jolie Môme could further entrench this argument. In the case of Jolie Môme the experience of the *cabaret*, initiated in 1996 and resumed on several occurrences since then, could be a good illustration of this point. As the format of the performance was more flexible and adaptable, the *cabarets* have been seen as ideal tools the company could use when carrying out support performances during political mobilisations.

The *Cabaret d'urgence contre la guerre* set up in 2001, was also used to support the strikes at Mac Donalds (2001-2002),⁵⁰⁸ the *sans-papiers* struggles, or during the mobilisations against the Apartheid Wall in Palestine (from 2003-2004 onwards). All those *cabarets* established further support and occasioned encounters with a pluralist variety of militant traditions and activist groups, such as the 'Sans' movement, the Palestine campaign groups or CGT and SUD syndicalists. More recently, in addition to performing during demonstrations or political actions in social conflicts, the *cabaret Basta Ya!* has been casually but quite frequently performed on Sundays in the streets of Paris, often in historically working class but long since gentrified areas (such as rue Mouffetard, rue Daguerre, rue Montorgueil or in Montmartre), as an additional gesture to reclaim the streets as a public space, and at times occasioning difficulties with the police. Finally, the *Cabaret Déchaîné*, designed to finance their own struggle in the CFDT trial, also inspired the production *Procès-Spectacle* for the company.

As to MAP, like most of our collectives, the band has been seen to favour live performance over studio recording or media appearances. Releasing their first album in April 2006, at the climax of the anti-CPE movement, MAP embarked on a 18-month long tour (April 2006-October 2007), performing in very different types of locations for different kinds of audience: initiating their tour with a selection at the prestigious Printemps de Bourges festival, MAP's tour progressively became more integrated with militant events. Touring during an intense period of social and political mobilisation – from the aftermath of the November 2005 revolt to the anti-CPE movement in Spring, from the local mobilisations around the new immigration policies⁵⁰⁹ to those around the 2007 presidential campaign – MAP gradually asserted a more explicit connection between their musical practice and their political beliefs, emerging from their own backgrounds as well as the development of their artistic practice. In the context of contemporary music industry, the choice of emphasis on live performance could be construed as a *de facto* political statement of a collective who wanted to stay resolutely '*engagé et populaire*'.⁵¹⁰ In the end Jolie Môme and MAP are both evidence of a dialectical reversal taking place. Grassroots communities here are not just alternative target markets, but part and parcel of a collective appropriation of a form of political expression through culture.

⁵⁰⁸ This struggle was immortalised by the company with the song 'Macdo Macstrike'.

See <http://www.cie-joliemome.org/spip.php?article82>

⁵⁰⁹ In the initiative 'Uni-e-s contre l'immigration jetable'. See <http://www.contreimmigrationjetable.org/>

⁵¹⁰ Tévanian (2009), *ibid.*

2.3 *Musical live performance as an anticapitalist space of authenticity*

All our artists see live performance as the most legitimate form of artistic practise: Hamé (LR), Keny Arkana (KA), Saïdou Dias (MAP), Mouss (MHOC), and Myriam (OPA) all said in interview that live performance was their favourite moment, because ‘*on est là, dans le public, avec les gens, quand t’aimes les gens, c’est ce qu’il y a de mieux*’.⁵¹¹ As established above, performance is often envisaged as a moment of authenticity and creation of spontaneous social interaction provisionally ridden of the notion of commodification. This is particularly true of free, benefit, or support gigs, but also of events re-establishing the street as a public space of social and cultural performance, such as busking (JM), parades (MR, TB, VK), unplanned gigs following demonstrations or political actions or meetings (KA, MAP, MHOC). In that sense, those moments could be regarded as inscribed in an anticapitalist logic – again, depending on the context of performance – or, to reformulate to Hakim Bey expression, as *temporary autonomous zones* (TAZ) of authenticity endowing communities through festive practice with a shared space of collective empowerment and social appropriation.⁵¹² Hamé compared live performance and record production in those terms:

[Q]: *Donc en fait, l’objet culturel, le disque ou le mode de diffusion par la radio, ou la télé même, ça a un rôle mais c’est pas une fin en soi: la fin en soi c’est la scène, c’est l’immédiat, c’est l’interaction directe avec le public, la rencontre ?*

[A]: Le disque c’est une trace immortalisée d’œuvre, bon ben c’est important parce que c’est ça qui te fait croûter aussi en partie, mais là où vraiment je m’éclate c’est sur scène. Alors, en plus y a l’adrénaline, y a... tu sais c’est bandant la scène ; [...] là où vraiment on s’éclate, c’est avec les gens, c’est sur scène, entendre le son, nos musiques résonner, voir les effets que ça a sur les gens, le retour aussi [direct, immédiat] de cette nuit de noce, de noce avec le public où la musique est l’élément qui structure le tout et qui permet ça [...], c’est des sensations que t’as nulle part ailleurs. En studio t’as pas de sensations, [...] pour le rap en particulier, [...] c’est plus de l’exécution, du travail léché. [Mais] c’est aussi la performance tu vois, car on est des partisans du *uncut* tu vois, du *one shot*, pas de coupure, pas de drop, etc [...] Moi, un texte de rap, c’est une tranche, c’est de la première à la dernière rime, ça doit être, la trace d’un battement cardiaque. C’est ton souffle, c’est ton cœur qui bat, [...] tes tripes, qui [...] pendant trois minutes trente, vont gérer, un texte, la scansion...⁵¹³

However in economic terms, this also creates another set of problems. Live performances in France should in theory always be declared in the legal framework of the *intermittent du spectacle* status, but as Le Guern shows, this marginalises a lot smaller structures and venues, and favours again economic concentration, leaving semi-legal economic activity as the only alternative in the case of not solidly established structures, such as small bars and

⁵¹¹ Interview with Saïdou Dias, Lille, 7th November 2007. See Appendix 6.

⁵¹² Bey (1985), *ibid*.

⁵¹³ Interview with Mohamed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé), Paris, 18th June 2006. See Appendix 6.

cafés.⁵¹⁴ In that respect, the associative tradition can be a valid compromise, an acceptable way to promote the collective community of origin through an individual artistic practice. Dario, of Stéréotypes, clearly stated in interview that the associative network KMK was founded in 1998 as an alternative way to support their hip hop collective. The notion of *'faire quelque chose pour le quartier, parce qu'après tout, c'est de là qu'on vient, nous'*,⁵¹⁵ was present but it was only a secondary dimension. The same scenario happened with Moleque de Rua, who carry out *ateliers-résidence* in socially disadvantaged areas through the associative network Art-Rue / Créer C Résister (AR/CCR), but who see the artistic practice as the primary dimension of their activity. Duda was closed to feeling insulted by the term 'socio-cultural animation' in informal conversations.

⁵¹⁴ See Le Guern, Philippe & Dancey, Hugh (2007), 'De la difficulté d'émerger sur les scènes de « musiques actuelles »: les exemples de la France et de l'Angleterre', in J.M. Seca ed, *op. cit.*, pp 84-112.

⁵¹⁵ Interview with Dario Anatole, Toulouse, 15th October 2007.

Conclusion. Economic autonomy as a political dialectic

To sum up, economic autonomy is only achievable in relative terms, insofar as if alternative production and distribution strategies are not in themselves sufficient to generate a form of economic resistance to *major* music industries, they certainly contribute to creating a *space of critique* exposing the logic of market concentration and oligopoly characteristic of a capitalist approach to culture. Thus, while the notion of absolute autonomy resurfaces as a mirage against which strategies of self-managed production and DIY distribution are played out, the resulting dynamic always triggers a form of politicisation through economic practice, mainly through two strategies: subversion of heteronomy, as is the case for the collectives accepting to work *within* the framework of independent labels (MAP, MR, KA); or autonomy as more radical separation from domination, implying a form of limited visibility (isolation or even repression), as is the case for artists who choose to self-manage most of the processes in record production (LR, JM, OPA, ST). If the latter strategy triggers an ambivalent relation to cultural industries, reproducing or even facilitating commodification and a utilitarian approach to culture – a phenomenon denounced as ‘guerrilla capitalism’ – many of our artists when faced with those contradictions have attempted to maintain a pragmatic outlook on market constraints, politicising their approach to music industries. For instance, in interview, Keny Arkana suggested that she viewed the choice of the independent label Because as a necessary evil for the wider diffusion of radical ideas, and that visibility could also be subverted towards more militant, political motives, as in the experience of the *Appel Aux Sans Voix*, a relative case of misappropriation of Keny Arkana’s notoriety. This is even more obvious in the case of Mouss & Hakim and the activist initiative Motivé-e-s.

Equally, if Internet and Copy Left distribution are not sufficient to decommodify music, and may be seen as mere substitutes of the cultural object, all our case studies have made significant attempts at resisting the mediation of the cultural commodity and enhancing performance or in some instances, collective music practice (MR, TB, VK). This in itself triggers a politicisation of practice, and in many instances an unofficial, grassroots associative dynamic was observed to emerge from those alternatives. A mainspring for expressing a collective identity, the associative dynamic may also be a means for the artists to stabilise or diversify their precarious economic activity, thereby substituting their economic dependency on the cultural industries to a financial dependency on state funding. The next chapter will analyse the power struggle at stake in this intricate process between state heteronomy and autonomy of expression in the associative dynamic, as proto- or para-political forms of resistance through cultural practice.

Chapter VII.

Interpellation vs. divestment: state authorities and the participation ideal

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Conclusion. Critique as a space of negotiation of citizenship

This final chapter shall examine the intricate ideal of political autonomy which grassroots musical collectives aspire to in their practice. Alongside the market, the other major field of struggle for the case studies lies in the relation they entertain to the state. In that respect, the sense of resistance that grassroots musical practices generate is affected by the power relation all of our bands have to the state. It revolves essentially around the notions of citizenship and integration, played out most visibly on the terrain of cultural practice. When faced with the state and its derived ideological apparatus of cultural policy, the ambition to political autonomy paradoxically emerges as an anticapitalist aspiration to *equality* through *participation*. This is especially true, and a particularly acute issue, for the case studies embedded in the logic of local associative networks facilitating socio-cultural animation

(*animation socioculturelle*), as they generally aim at producing alternative understandings of citizenship.⁵¹⁶

Focusing on four different cases of *associations* (Les Gamins, KMK, Rasta Baboul, Tactikollectif), an analysis of the relation they entertain with state cultural policy could be useful for understanding the different strategies of resistance they can have and the scope of their action. At first sight, two competing forms of cultural appropriation might appear to be pitted against each other, namely the imposition agenda for state cultural policy against a seemingly autonomous grassroots cultural practice. However, socio-cultural integration could also be perceived as a more complex, dialectical process of negotiation of symbolic power through the promotion of alternative perceptions of integration and practices of citizenship.

⁵¹⁶ The case studies concerned here are the five binomials MHOC/TK, MR/CCR, TB/RB, VK/GDLAR, ST/KMK. See Appendix 1 for list of acronyms and abbreviations, and Appendix 2 for detailed account of those groups.

1. An ambivalent relation to cultural policy: citizenship through socio-cultural integration

1.1 Citizenship in crisis in France: cultural practice as a form of integration?

Citizenship has been viewed as a primary vehicle of social integration, featuring three progressive stages: *civic* fundamental rights (freedom of expression, equality before the law, property); *political* rights (election participation); and *social* rights (health, unemployment protection, trade union rights, all guaranteed by the state).⁵¹⁷ By endowing a people with the same rights and responsibilities, the notion of citizenship not only creates a sense of belonging to a political community but is also a basic framework for instituting social cohesion.

In France, the No vote on the EU constitution in May 2005 heralded a particularly acute period of crisis of citizenship.⁵¹⁸ Coupled with a crisis of political representation, the disappearance of the nation-state in the era of globalisation was deplored and interpreted as a breeding ground for disintegration of national identity, of social cohesion and of a political common ground altogether. On the other hand, campaigns to encourage the youth to vote, particularly in the disadvantaged *banlieues*, areas most affected by electoral abstention, show that this trend was also accompanied by a wide popular debate emerging from below on the question of citizenship, social cohesion, and political representation, of which No vote in France is a case in point.⁵¹⁹ Since the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, the terms of the discussion have been displaced, shifting towards the interpretive frameworks of integration and national identity, particularly manifest with the creation of the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, and National Identity, with an apparent polarisation between two privileged fields of public debate in representative political and media institutions (in parliament, or on national television) on the one hand, and cultural expressions at more grassroots level on the other.⁵²⁰

Following 21st April 2002, a considerable electoral trauma,⁵²¹ different critical trends have been seen to emerge around the notions of citizenship and integration, ranging from

⁵¹⁷ Typology based on the definition of citizenship found in the online *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, retrieved at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/citizenship/>.

⁵¹⁸ See Kouvelakis (2005), *op. cit.*

⁵¹⁹ The example of the collective ACELEFEU, a grassroots initiative set up immediately after the November 2005 revolts, and based in Clichy-sous-Bois, stands as an epitome of this tendency. See http://aclefeu.blogspot.com/2006/03/le-collectif-de-clichy-sous-bois_24.html

⁵²⁰ On the distortion of the argument around identity, see notably the *Grand débat sur l'identité nationale* initiated by the French government in January 2010, retrieved at: <http://www.debatidentitenationale.fr/>

⁵²¹ See account of 21st April 2002 narrated above in Chapter III.

sheer rejection to mild correction of a dominant discourse on integration. At the grassroots level of this emerging space of debate around national identity, a wide array of discourses have surfaced, stretching from an assertion of cultural difference to a re-appropriation of collective identity, located essentially in cultural expressions, and often inherently connected to artistic practices – and all the more acutely so in areas of political and cultural exclusion. This touches on the debates in anthropology around the notion of *infrapolitics*, and grassroots everyday practices as forms of or cultural resistance.⁵²²

1.2 Cultural policy in France: socio-cultural integration, grassroots resistance.

In a country where the notion of cultural exception (*exception culturelle*) is part and parcel of national identity,⁵²³ cultural policy is rooted in a foundational opposition between highbrow culture (*culture savante*) and popular culture (*culture populaire*).⁵²⁴ Oscillating between the elitist shortcomings of ‘cultural democracy’ and in contrast, the populist pitfall of ‘cultural democratisation’, cultural policy has been constructed as a crucial space of democratic debate.⁵²⁵ The socio-cultural animation (*animation socio-culturelle*) dynamic (SCA) emerged in the 1980s under state supervision as a primary locus of opposition, debate, and negotiation between two stances. On the one hand a popular expression of resistance or discontent *vis-à-vis* the social cohesion guaranteed by the state was formulated by the newly socially marginalised classes, qualified as ‘excluded’ (*les exclus*). On the other hand, the politics of social cohesion implemented by the state through miscellaneous policy frameworks (*politique de la ville*, education, youth and sports and in particular) was promoted to enhance socio-cultural integration. With no exact equivalent in the English-speaking world, the *politique de la ville* framework essentially designates a secretary of state

⁵²² See Scott, J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Kelley, R. D. G. (1994). *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. New York: Free Press; Reed Jr., A. (2000). *Class Notes: Posing as Politics and Other Thoughts on the American Scene*. New York: The New Press.

⁵²³ See Regourd, S. (2004). *L'exception culturelle*. Paris: PUF; Benhamou, F. (2006). *Les dérèglements de l'exception culturelle: Plaidoyer pour une perspective européenne*. Paris: Le Seuil; Poirrier, P. (2006). *L'Etat et la culture en France au XXème siècle*. Paris: Hachette.

⁵²⁴ This conservative ideology of culture has been particularly acute in France ever since the *Beaux-Arts* tradition, and permeates to great extent the overall conception of culture in education and cultural transmission. See Bazin H. (2005). ‘Autour du réseau espaces populaires de création culturelle’, in *Bibliographie Recherche-Action*. Retrieved at: <http://biblio.recherche-action.fr/document.php?id=145>

⁵²⁵ For historical account of cultural policy in France, see Looseley, D. (1995). *The Politics of Fun: Cultural Policy and Debate in Contemporary France*. Oxford: Berg; Passeron, J. C. (2003). ‘Consommation et réception de la culture: la démocratisation des publics’ (pp. 361-390) and Saez, G. (2003). ‘Les politiques culturelles de la ville. Du triomphe du public à son effacement’ (pp. 197-225): both in O. Donnat and P. Tolila (eds), *Le(s) public(s) de la culture*. Paris: FNSP. Vol. 1; Bensaid, D. (2004). ‘Imagination au pouvoir, pouvoirs imaginaires’, in *Culture Publique, opus 1: L'imagination au pouvoir*. Paris: Sens & Tonka, pp. 137-143.

in charge of urban regeneration and social integration of socially disadvantaged areas – *Zones Urbaines Sensibles* (ZUS). This set of policies also targets youth and sports (*jeunesse et sports*), and education in priority areas, or *Zones d'Education Prioritaires* (ZEP).⁵²⁶

Notwithstanding a steady trend towards a cultural shift of critique shaped by, and affecting the response of political institutions, the implementation of cultural policy should logically have a key role to play in social integration. Many grassroots communities have developed cultural practice as an outlet to express social discontent and an *active* critique of social exclusion. As a privileged field of expression at the level of civil society, cultural practice has often been construed as a vehicle of social participation, hence an essential locus of assertion of citizenship. In crises of citizenship cultural practice becomes an ideological field of struggle, and a privileged space of exploration for the debate on national identity. In schematic terms, it could be suggested that while cultural policy aims to implement integration via socio-cultural animation (SCA), grassroots cultural expressions can also increasingly become the vehicle of discontents and formulate a political critique of citizenship, thereby constituting a resistance to a top-down logic of socio-cultural integration, perceived as oppressive incorporation and disempowering alienation.

1.3 Citizenship as a dialectical process:

socio-cultural integration and grassroots cultural practice

Ultimately, this contradiction between integration via cultural policy and resistance to state politics via grassroots cultural practice produces a space of critique and negotiation of citizenship. The following sections will explore the processes of socio-cultural integration and investigate the relationship case studies have to state cultural policy. Exploring the different strategies deployed to actively reclaim citizenship and integration, we shall analyse the ambivalent relationship that those grassroots cultural networks have to the state through local authorities.

Close examination of the material choices adopted by four *associations* (Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue, KMK, Rasta Baboul, Tactikollectif) *vis-à-vis* state cultural policy, both in terms of ideological discourse and practical strategies raises a number of questions. To what extent could this dynamic contribute to social integration? Are those networks mediators for facilitating state policy and enhancing a sense of citizenship, or rather, do they stand as

⁵²⁶ For a more general account of the relationship between the state and associative networks in France via policy frameworks, particularly *politique de la ville*, see Laville, Jean-Louis (2010), *Politique de l'association* (Paris: Seuil).

primary expressions and popular platforms of resistance to a form of exclusion deemed to be perpetrated by the policy framework? Furthermore, do they threaten the power of the state or on the contrary do they reinforce and legitimise it? After exploring the heteronomy at stake in the strategies of interpellation of authorities resorted to by Les Gamins and KMK, we shall assess the paradigm of autonomy in the strategies of disinvestment *vis-à-vis* the state chosen by Tarace Boulba and Taktikollectif, in order to understand the dialectics of power appropriation underlying this socio-cultural process.

2. Reviving social bonding through the socio-cultural associative dynamic: a grassroots step toward political activism?

A major concern, common to all our collectives emerged from the topography of musical affinity networks proposed earlier: artistic practice, particularly popular music practice emerging from socially and culturally disadvantaged communities, stands as a privileged vehicle to activate connections, create cultural networks, hence revive social bonding. For most case studies, this process takes the form (or somehow entertains a relation to) local associative activity, whether formally instituted or not. However, the setting up of *registered associations* is a recurrent strategy used to structure the cultural resistance. Creating benchmarks for the networks that make them more visible and readable, the socio-cultural animation (SCA) dynamic, reclaimed as an empowering process of socio-cultural action (*action socio-culturelle*) contributes to instituting a more stable foundation for the grassroots network at local level. It endows the process of reviving social bonding, or weaving the social fabric with the much broader dimensions of durability and continuity.

2.1 Four scenarios of associative dynamic.

The socio-cultural animation (SCA) dynamic in our fieldwork appeared to be extremely significant, and particularly relevant in areas of exclusion or with social networks not (or less) legitimised and visible on the broader social scale. As the first level, most casual and flexible form of socialisation outside the private sphere networks, and the most local form of social institutionalisation, the *association* emerges as an essential and powerful mainspring of socialisation, enabling one to identify (and *identify with*) a network, community or common social identity. If our bands are all involved in this process, some collectives have formally established associations (*‘de jure’*) – registered with local authorities, with legal status and a geographical identification number, while others establish the network more informally, as grassroots, self-proclaimed associations (*‘de facto’*). In the end, four scenarios could be observed for our bands:

(i) Registered associations resorting to the socio-cultural animation as a routine activity.

This is the case for the autonomously funded associations Tarace Boulba, or Tactikollectif (the association around the musical project *Mouss et Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées*), but also for registered associations dependent on local authority funding, such as KMK (the association around Stéréotypes), or Les Gamins De L’Art-Rue (the direct cultural relay for Voukoum but mostly for Moleque de Rua when they are on

metropolitan soil). Those associations all have full-time staff running them, or staff on equivalent contracts called '*Equivalent Temps Plein*' (ETP). Staff levels are generally reduced to minimum due to a lack of resources: one for Tarace Boulba, three for Tactikollectif, two for KMK, three for Les Gamins.

(ii) Registered associations used mainly as channels of perpetuation and stabilisation of the artistic activity.

In other cases, a registered association is set up but does not necessarily imply *routine*, structured socio-cultural animation activities. The association is viewed rather as a tool to structure the artistic activity formally. It also forms a framework to facilitate financial support through membership subscriptions, and create a sense of identification with a cultural network. Jolie Môme, Friends of Moleque de Rua (the association around the band Moleque de Rua), and Voukoum, can all be placed in that category. Registered association exists, but there is no financial structuring of the association: it is run by volunteers and experienced as informal. As it is not a priority, the association as such is often restricted to a closer circle of friends or supporters, or not so well known by the entourage of the artistic collective whose cultural network reaches out much beyond the scope of the association, one amongst many strategies of development for the case studies.

(iii) Self-proclaimed associations as social platforms for cultural networks.

In other cases, the associative form can also be resorted to in an autonomous, informal way by the artistic collectives. Amongst our case studies, this type of initiative can be mainly found for political, militant groups set up by members of the artistic collectives OPA or Keny Arkana. Leading members of the collective OPA have hence set up the association Hacktivismes, an Internet citizen network of resistance to surveillance, repression, and the criminalisation of resistance. As for Keny Arkana, in 2004 the artist also set up an activist network with a group of friends (core of 8-10 people), a radical *altermondialiste* association called La Rage du Peuple, active in grassroots forms of political activism, committed to direct action, and promoting '*une colère positive, fédératrice, porteuse d'espoir et de changements dans les cités*'.⁵²⁷ In 2007, Keny Arkana also initiated, with another set of people, the popular assembly initiative Appel Aux Sans Voix, which was soon joined and

⁵²⁷ See LRDP manifesto at: <http://www.laragedupeuple.org/>

The collective La Rage du Peuple was active until 2008, after which it was dissolved.

See interview of Keny Arkana (collected in *KA webreview*) at:

http://www.nouvelle-vague.com/zoom.php?source=recherche&zoom_id=317

supported by members of OPA. If not an association *per se*, this militant initiative which self-proclaims its existence as a network can be argued to trigger an interpretive point of reference for other social and cultural networks, who identify with, or recognise the existing network to a varying degree, hence endowing it with a form of grassroots legitimacy. Therefore, in all those cases, the self-proclaimed collective is an unofficial, grassroots association, connected to the model of the formally constituted association yet not officially instituted, and most of all, still emerging as benchmarks in the nebulous landscape of resistance.

(iv) *Informal networks (no associative claim).*

As to the last case scenario, the collectives MAP and La Rumeur are not involved in associations *per se*. Instead, in both bands, the members come from a tradition of local, associative action or activism, which tend to shape both their artistic practice and the way they relate to other cultural networks. Before setting up MAP, the two MCs (Saïdou Dias and HK) were both involved in their local community life (*vie associative*), and in different associative networks which organised cultural activities and facilitated artistic practice, and helped them develop their own artistic practice of hip hop.⁵²⁸ Through their artistic practice and other diverse public activities they may get involved in, the bands meet other collectives, produces in practice an informal network of cultural, social, or militant connections. Over the years the band La Rumeur has collaborated with other artists with a similar approach to hip hop, hence delineating a specific cultural landscape, a radical *rap conscient* scene. In this broader artistic network constituted over the years, the artists tend to have an uncompromising, *underground*, and political (or radically *conscient*) approach to hip hop practice, and resist the commodification and de-radicalisation of French hip hop. This informal cultural network comprises of hip hop artists such as Sheryo, Casey, Specio, Anfalsh, or Le Téléphone Arabe, who have all collaborated with each other on punctual artistic projects – such as collaborations (*‘featurings’*) on a song of an album, which La Rumeur is often part of. They share an opposition to the very label of ‘French hip hop’ (*‘rap français’*), and all instead claim the historically meaningful term of ‘migrant descendants hip hop’ (*‘rap de fils d’immigrés’*).

⁵²⁸ Interview with Saïdou Dias, Lille, 7th November 2007. See Appendix 6.

2.2 The socio-cultural animation dynamic:

a mainspring for reviving *lien social* to resist against exclusion?

Whether established formally (*'de jure'* – Jolie Môme, Tactikollectif, Moleque de Rua, KMK, Tarace Boulba, Voukoum) or practiced more informally (*'de facto'* – La Rage du Peuple and Appel Aux Sans Voix for Keny Arkana and OPA, and to a lesser extent, the informal networks around MAP and La Rumeur), the associative form of organisation inherently shapes, and reconfigures social identities. Within the broader political context of fragmentation of class and *invisibilisation* of the resistance, the emergence of associations may also be seen as a concrete response to a quest for social recognition, with the grassroots self-proclaimed associations being a more autonomous form of legitimization of the social network than the formally established one (*'de jure'*).

Activating social bonding, the associative dynamic, and particularly the SCA dynamic, anchors the cultural practice locally in the communities and can become a tool for working towards their improvement. For musical practitioners, socio-cultural animation, or *action*, can emerge as a privileged vehicle to stabilise and perpetuate the dynamics of inclusive equality and grassroots collectivity that may be achieved temporarily in musical live performances. For instance, for both Tarace Boulba and KMK, the objective of achieving social *recognition* is wholeheartedly assumed, but within a framework of a social, materialist critique of, and resistance to, socio-economic inequalities and its ensuing consequence in the cultural field, situated from the standpoint of the grassroots.

As mentioned, by and large, most case studies observed are inscribed in an informal grassroots network, or broader community revolving around them, as unofficial forms of *association* with their activities based on an often deprived material basis (lack of resources) and looking to step out of the vicious cycle of socio-economic exclusion. For instance, with its 24 rotating performers, the Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre necessarily generates a broader informal network of socially 'excluded' people coming together through a collective cultural practice of sharing: autonomous activists, marginalised and/or self-marginalising communities excluded from mainstream cultural apparatuses, and to a relative yet certain extent, socio-economically marginalised fringes of the lower class youth of Bordeaux.

Thus, the most recurrent aim of the socio-cultural animation process, and more generally the broader associative dynamic in which case studies are necessarily situated, lies in the related notions of *legitimacy* and *access*: typically, broadening access to cultural expression through the promotion of collective festive performance, and gaining hence a form of recognition of *specific social identities*, most often considered denied or delegitimized in

public discourse. The festival *Origines Contrôlées*, organised every autumn since its first edition in 2004 by the cultural association Tactikollectif is a striking example of this type of claim. On the editorial introduction to the 2008 edition of the festival, the Tactikollectif comments on the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, and National Identity, presenting the project as a festival struggling for the *recognition* of specific history: '*Voilà que l'on nous sert les prix de l'intégration, décernés par le Ministère de l'Immigration et de l'Identité Nationale. [...] Nous ne sommes pas des modèles d'intégration dont on se servirait pour taper sur la tête des autres*'.⁵²⁹ Notwithstanding the reaction to the evolution of the nationalist, xenophobic vision developed by the Sarkozy government, the festival emerges from a long initiated reflection on colonial history and its legacy, and features a series of events exploring history, memory, and the specific contribution of postcolonial immigration legacy on the whole of French society:

Il n'y a pas si longtemps, la France faisait figure de pays colonialiste et civilisateur d'indigènes. Aujourd'hui, le droit d'inventaire demeure. «Origines Contrôlées» s'est penché, une semaine durant, sur les résidus de ce colonialisme qui hante encore une société française désormais pluriculturelle. Il aura donc fallu attendre 45 ans pour que la question de la colonisation sorte des eaux immergées de notre histoire nationale, l'histoire française. Quand on sait que dix millions de Français ont un ascendant étranger direct, on peut s'interroger. L'heure de l'occultation volontaire, ou pas, des pratiques coloniales passées et présentes a cessé. Aujourd'hui, même à pas comptés, les débats se font jour, des colloques s'organisent tant de la part des spécialistes que des militants. Quid des politiques, héritiers d'une pratique coloniale par définition inique ? [...] Modestement, «Origines Contrôlées», par ses interventions, a voulu contribuer à démêler l'écheveau des idées reçues, des réflexes coloniaux culturels et souvent inconscients qui hantent, encore de nos jours, la patrie des droits de l'homme. [...] A sa place, «Origines Contrôlées» a démontré, durant toutes ses manifestations, que l'histoire et l'actualité coloniales ne sont plus affaires de spécialistes, du passé notamment. Toutes les contributions ont enrichi et éclairé le débat sous un nouveau jour désinhibé. Les points de vue comme les horizons se sont parfois confrontés et souvent complétés. Qu'ils soient artistes, historiens, sociologues, romanciers, militants associatifs, politiques, chacun s'est efforcé de construire ce que l'on pourrait appeler une «*mémoire impossible*».⁵³⁰

Envisaging culture primarily as a form of education, at times festive and entertaining, and at other times more situated in the tradition of popular education, the festival aims to re-appropriate denied aspects of the past as well as shed light on the present postcolonial condition. In that sense, *Origines Contrôlées* is a striking instance of cultural resistance. Focusing on the interpretive struggle of dominant discursive configurations on the specific, postcolonial legacy, it also aims at universality. The dynamic of socio-cultural animation is conceived of as a mainspring towards autonomy of discourse and grassroots empowerment, and plays a privileged role in generating a process of active resistance:

⁵²⁹ See editorial for *Origines Contrôlées*, 5th edition, retrieved at: http://www.tactikollectif.org/rubrique.php?id_rubrique=88#nb1

⁵³⁰ Tactikollectif also released its own literature on the subject to promote this initiative. Quote taken from *Origines Contrôlées, la revue*, n°1, Sept 2005 (Toulouse: Tactikollectif), p 1.

Nous devons le dire pour être clair, nous ne pensons pas que le passé colonial se reproduise tel quel, ces héritages coloniaux se sont transformés dans la période postcoloniale. Nous pensons simplement qu'il est contreproductif, pour comprendre notre société telle qu'elle est aujourd'hui, d'occulter la période coloniale. Pour dépasser les tabous de cette histoire, le travail est énorme, avec d'autres formes d'actions (politiques, universitaires, institutionnelles...). Le rôle de l'action culturelle est déterminant. Il semble primordial de déconstruire des images et stéréotypes qui perdurent aujourd'hui et qui s'appliquent plus particulièrement aux Français ayant des ascendants de l'immigration coloniale ou postcoloniale. En effet, ces images sont des vecteurs importants dans la diffusion d'a priori négatifs. C'est un travail de longue haleine, qui ne trouvera son utilité qu'à partir du moment où les acteurs (programmes scolaires, films, documentaires, expositions...) s'en empareront pour en faire un véritable outil, pour tenter de dépasser ces "tabous". Cette deuxième édition du festival Origines Contrôlées est envisagée dans cet état d'esprit. Après avoir en 2003, en 2004, largement évoqué le passé colonial, nous avons souhaité mettre l'accent sur les prolongements de cette histoire dans les problématiques plus récentes et contemporaines. Durant cette semaine, avec des débats, des films mais aussi avec la programmation artistique, nous voulons donner à voir et à entendre, ce que fut et ce que c'est, d'être héritier de cette histoire. Que ce soit, en examinant l'état des lieux, de la situation sociale et politique des Français issus de l'immigration maghrébine, afro-antillaise, ou en s'interrogeant sur la nature des rapports sociaux de sexe, au travers de rencontres-débats ; Que ce soit en témoignant, de la pensée vivace et si contemporaine, de Frantz Fanon ou en rendant hommage à Slimane Azem une légende de la chanson immigrée méconnue du grand public, au travers de films ; Que ce soit bien sur en donnant la parole aux artistes, précieux appuis du combat contre les discriminations et pour l'égalité.⁵³¹

Considering the colonial divide still present in French society – a divide which intellectuals around Blanchard and Bancel call '*fracture coloniale*' – the festival appears as a privileged point of convergence between political and cultural initiatives, playing hence a crucial role for our case studies as it contributes to activating and establishing connections between similar initiatives of resistance to a racist and xenophobic discourse.⁵³²

2.3 *An initial step into politics:*

socio-cultural animation as liberation or alienation?

From the standpoint of political activism, the socio-cultural animation dynamic may be interpreted as a favourable platform for generating expressions of resistance, ultimately holding a potential for a politicisation of cultural expressions. However, within the context of socio-cultural animation, the activist implication may often be envisaged as a more 'social' form of commitment than a 'political' resistance *per se*. The very term *socio-cultural animation* suggests that in fact the process is usually qualified as 'social', implying a separation between the social / associative, and political / activist spheres, and for that reason, may even be interpreted as a form of depoliticisation. This is why some grassroots activists involved in community life (*vie associative*) often discard the term 'socio-cultural animation' to reclaim a term they identify with a dynamic of resistance and community

⁵³¹ *Origines Contrôlées 2005: dossier de présentation*, p 2. Internal archives documents.

⁵³² See Blanchard, Bancel & Lemaire (2005), *op. cit.*

empowerment – that of ‘socio-cultural action’.⁵³³ Our collectives and the corresponding associative networks they are embedded in are particularly involved in that dynamic of empowerment and re-appropriation.

The case of the ‘world music affinity’ collectives (Moleque de Rua, Tarace Boulba, Voukoum) are in that respect a very interesting example of the ambiguity, complexity, and inter-penetration between the social, the cultural, and the political in artistic resistance.⁵³⁴ In terms of links with political activist groups, the three collectives are more prone to feel close to, or be associated with, grassroots political networks or autonomous movements, because of the similar approach in the way the networks emerged and organise. Thus, the relation with militant groups tends to be rather implicit, and can only be traced concretely either in the entourage of the collectives, or in the affinities expressed individually by their members. For instance, at the time of its foundation, Moleque de Rua expressed an affinity with the World Social Forum, crucible *altermondialisme* and alternatives to neoliberal globalization. On the inception of the campaign to implement a Tobin tax, led by the network Attac, some Tarace Boulba members were individually involved. They can also be seen supporting ‘sans’, autonomous movements such as the ‘sans-emploi’ unemployed network Agir contre le Chômage (AC!), the ‘sans-logement’ housing rights campaign Droit Au Logement (DAL), or the anti-AIDS network Act’Up, campaigning against homophobia and for social rights of sexually discriminated minorities.⁵³⁵

To sum up, all of our three collectives situate themselves clearly within a logic of *resistance* in their artistic practice. Tarace Boulba tends to struggle against individualism and the breaking of solidarities, Moleque de Rua against consumerism, and Voukoum reclaims the Creole legacy. Yet the position they defend will not be necessarily explicitly political. In some cases, informal interviews with some collectives leading figures (Moleque de Rua, Voukoum) revealed very strong scepticism toward the very notion of the *political*. Bringing to light profound disillusion with traditional forms of political activism for their associated risks of institutionalisation, deemed disempowering for the grassroots masses, the term *political* was often discarded to describe the practice of the collective, and rejected as

⁵³³ For more details and a summary of those debates, see *Agora débats/jeunesse* (2005), *op. cit.* ; *Quel avenir pour les jeunes issus des classes populaires ? EMPAN* 67, September 2007 (Fenouillet: Editions Erès) ; Faure & Garcia (2005), *op. cit.*, pp 29-68 & 171-176 ; Laville (2010), *op. cit.*

⁵³⁴ See Chapter III *infra*.

⁵³⁵ AC !: Agir ensemble contre le Chômage is an activist network of the unemployed. DAL: Droit au Logement is a network campaign for more state-funded and affordable housing, and against homelessness. WSF: World Social Forum. See the networks websites. AC !: <http://www.ac.eu.org/> DAL: <http://www.droitaulogement.org/> Act’Up: <http://www.actupparis.org/>

construed in restricted, '*politicien*' terms. If this approach could probably be considered as an *anti-political* conception of resistance,⁵³⁶ the paradigm of the *social* is much more widely accepted and emphasised in a grassroots rhetoric where the cultural always precedes the political. In that sense, art is understood as always exceeding politics.

Thus it appears that in certain cases, the word 'political' is vigorously discarded to qualify the commitment, 'political' being altogether assimilated with powerful institutions and the logic of the dominant, working against the social dynamic of grassroots associative networks coming from and working with and for 'the people'. Voukoum for instance, insistently define themselves as *Mouvman Kiltirel Gwadeloup* (Guadeloupe *cultural* movement, emphasis mine), regardless of their social and political impact in their neighbourhood, but if they see their day-to-day action as cultural, they do not deny that their overall goal is also political.⁵³⁷ However, it would be simplistic to argue that this 'social' form of commitment is an intrinsic feature of socio-cultural action. Other groups involved in local associative socio-cultural animation (Tactikollectif, KMK) find it less problematic to reclaim the term 'political' and appropriate it as their own. For instance, both Mouss & Hakim and Stéréotypes have taken a steady and explicit political stance in elections since 2001, particularly local elections in Toulouse. If the list *Motivé-e-s* (formed in 2001) had a direct connection to the ex-members of Zebda, one of the MCs of Stéréotypes also committed himself to the list that was formed for the following municipal elections, in 2008.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁶ See Kouvelakis (2007), *op.cit.*

⁵³⁷ This was noted in informal discussions with Amédée Labiny and Fred Demitrius, founding members of Voukoum, during participant observation in May 2006 at the festival *Musiques Métisses* in Angoulême. See Appendix 3 for list of empirical activities undertaken.

⁵³⁸ See Appendix 2 for detailed account of all those groups.

3. Misappropriation as a pragmatic form of resistance to state heteronomy

3.1 *The residence-workshop as a basis for reshaping citizenship*

Mainly funded by local authorities for cultural activities, Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue (GDLAR) have wholeheartedly embraced the constraints of state cultural policy, endowing their struggle against delinquency and social exclusion with a potentially ambivalent dimension, as they could be perceived as an alibi (*caution*) for the lack of state social and cultural provision. Working over the years in partnership with a great number of associations, festivals and cultural networks,⁵³⁹ the cultural associative network has managed to steadily mobilise funding from the Ministry of Culture and state local authorities, and sporadically from international instances or authorities, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or the EU.⁵⁴⁰

Yet, the strategy deliberately chosen to work *within* the framework of state cultural policy has also enabled the associative platform to develop residence-workshop projects, organised tours, and produced artists. The concept of residence-workshop (*atelier-résidence*) in particular has been designed as a practical tool of social empowerment for a grassroots reshaping of citizenship.

Usually rooted in socially disadvantaged areas (both urban and rural, but mainly urban), and aim to produce '*espaces de rencontre*', the facilitation of residence-workshops aims to trigger a dynamic of social recognition and positive identification.⁵⁴¹ Generally lasting around two weeks, residence-workshops have an artistic collective staying for around two weeks in an area usually economically disadvantaged, featuring very poor accessibility to cultural practice, such as Clichy-la-Garenne, Ma Campagne, Lormont, all respective

⁵³⁹ Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue has over the years collaborated with a lot of events, initiatives, and collectives featuring (amongst others): Nancy Jazz Pulsation, Musiques de nuits diffusion (Bordeaux), Casa musicale (Perpignan), l'Ara (Roubaix) Bebob fest. (Le Mans) Musique Métisses (Angoulême), Collectif Afrique (Beauvais), Parada (Roumanie / Italie / France), Voukoum (Guadeloupe), Collectif Afrique (Beauvais), Musiques Métisses (Angoulême), Quilombo Urbano (Brésil), Moleque de Rua (Brésil), Cie Accrorap (France), Casa Caraïbe et MDEM (Cuba), Gyrophonie (France), Cie Claudio Babilio (France / Brésil), Association des Groupes d'Expression Culturelle Brésilienne Meltingspot (Nord-Pas de Calais) Sab'Art horizons (Paris/Dakar). See Les Gamins website: <http://www.lesgaminsdelarue.net/>

⁵⁴⁰ Such as, more specifically: 'Ministère de la Culture, de la Jeunesse et des Sports ; Division Interministérielle à la Ville, l'ACSE (Agence nationale pour la Cohésion Sociale et l'Égalité des chances) ; Mission pour le Mécénat et l'Action Culturelle de la Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations (programmes des actions culturelles dans les quartiers)', and sporadically, 'Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et CULTURE FRANCE (l'ex-AFAA), et l'UE'. In 'Descriptif de l'association', retrieved at: <http://www.creerresister.org/Accueil.html>

⁵⁴¹ 'Bilan 1999', in Les Gamins de L'Art-Rue archives collected in May 2006.

banlieues of cities as diverse as Paris, Angoulême, Bordeaux.⁵⁴² The format of the workshops comprises of three facets, or stages. Firstly, the artistic workshops, offered on a daily basis during the period of the residence-workshop with small groups, generally targeting the youth, typically feature activities such as music-instrument making from recycled material, specific musical training (as diverse as *batucada* tradition, *gwo-ka* percussions, hip hop open mic sessions...), or street carnival related activities (e.g., making of masks and costumes from recycled material).⁵⁴³ Secondly social events are also organised to bring the whole community together with devices called '*arbres à palabres*'.⁵⁴⁴ Inspired by some African traditions, this would translate more or less as 'trees under which you talk', involving big outdoor meals cooked by the inhabitants, encounters with the artists, debates and talks, and other events to encourage social interaction. Finally, the residence finishes on collective productions and performances featuring the participants to the artistic workshops, to gather all the different aspects practiced in the community during the time of the residence.

3.2 Reclaiming the legitimacy of hip hop culture as a form of active citizenship

KMK presents the same ambivalence as Les Gamins in its relation to state cultural policy. The association heavily relies on state subsidies for funding. Like the residence-workshops proposed by Les Gamins, the workshops proposed by KMK in schools or MJC are funded by local authorities, the county council (*Conseil Général*), and the city council of Toulouse, and to a lesser extent or on a more casual basis, from private sponsorships. The authorities such as regional council of Midi-Pyrénées (*Conseil Régional*) and city council also provide funding for cultural events, particularly festivals. If the strategic choice of setting up a registered association with two full time employees implies dependency on state subsidies on the short-term, the association aims at financial autonomy on the long term, based on subscriptions or derived from the selling of cultural productions and events. Developing a different conception of profitability, based on artistic, collective, and social criteria, as opposed to financial objectives, the collective also mutualise resources with other associations, and benefit from the material support of a variety of partners, usually specific actors of the Toulouse countercultural scene, such as venues, small bookshops or hip hop

⁵⁴² Those examples are all residence-workshops (*atelier-résidences*) observed during fieldwork (2006-2007). See Appendix 3 for list of empirical activities undertaken.

⁵⁴³ *Gwo-ka* is a musical tradition specific to Guadeloupe, emerging out of the history of cultural resistance to slavery.

⁵⁴⁴ 'Note d'intention 2006', in internal archives of Les Gamins de L'Art-Rue collected in May 2006.

record shops, or publicity facilitated by fanzines or local press (such as *Intramuros*, the free local weekly edited by Toulouse city council), or local radios (such as radio FMR).

As an associative network devoted to hip hop culture, KMK is a vehicle of socialization through culture. It aims principally at achieving social integration and citizenship for the youth living in the disadvantaged outskirts of Toulouse through the recognition of urban culture(s). Reclaiming specifically the core values of hip hop – summed up in the slogan ‘peace, unity, love, and having fun!’,⁵⁴⁵ the collective highlights the festive and wilful spirit of a popular sub-culture, developed in the street and uniting the community at grassroots level:

Cette association a pour but:

- Favoriser l'accès à la culture sous toutes ses formes,
- L'aide et la participation à toute œuvre d'éducation populaire et d'action sociale pour les jeunes,
- Favoriser les moyens d'expression et l'accès à la citoyenneté pour les jeunes, notamment les plus défavorisés,
- La promotion et l'encouragement de valeurs humanistes,
- Le soutien à l'insertion des jeunes les plus en difficulté,
- Promouvoir les cultures urbaines d'origines ou d'influences diverses par une valorisation de l'ensemble de leurs aspects artistiques (musicaux, chorégraphiques, plastiques, graphiques, et théâtrales etc.), principalement au travers de loisirs, de manifestations ou d'événements, d'échanges culturels, artistiques, linguistiques et professionnels, d'actions d'enseignement et de formation ou d'activités culturelles, interculturelles et sociales,
- Assurer et développer une activité de production et de diffusion musicale et chorégraphique en utilisant pour cela tout mode ou moyen de promotion, d'information, de communication et d'action, ceci comprenant principalement la production, la diffusion, la composition, et l'interprétation de musiques et de danses contemporaines ou traditionnelles d'origines et d'influences diverses,
- Effectuer dans la mesure des limites, et selon les modalités prévues par la loi, toutes acquisitions, locations, ventes ou actes à titre onéreux, susceptibles de fournir à l'association « KMK production » la possibilité de se développer, de poursuivre ses buts et de réaliser ses objectifs.⁵⁴⁶

The presentation documents state clearly that the promotion of hip hop is a necessary act of resistance to the ethno-cultural exclusion that ensues from socio-economic marginalisation: *‘Nous essayons de palier à un manque de structuration et de représentation de la culture urbaine et du Hip hop au niveau des instances institutionnelles locales et régionales. [...] Les cultures urbaines flottent encore aujourd’hui dans une reconnaissance de second degré’*.⁵⁴⁷

For KMK, the SCA activities aim at *‘initier des vocations’* as well as *‘conscientisation’*, through a process of critical reflexion on one’s own social condition. Favours social and artistic diversity (*mixité, métissage*) to re-establish equality and direct democracy, those

⁵⁴⁵ A classic formula to describe the aims of US hip hop at its early stages in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the street parties organised on the projects. Quoted in English in ‘Association KMK Prod, présentation générale 2006’, internal archives collected at KMK Prod’s main base in Toulouse in 2006-2007.

⁵⁴⁶ From ‘Statuts de l’association KMK Production’, internal archives collected in archival research.

⁵⁴⁷ Found in ‘Présentation générale de KMK 2006’, in internal documents collected in archival research.

workshops are all attempts at a social emancipation through day-to-day appropriation of cultural expression. Like Les Gamins, it could be noted that the collective does not depart from a social perspective, condemned as misery-oriented (*misérabiliste*), or worse, ‘charity business’. Their primary values, artistic professionalism, cultural exchange, sharing and transmission of savoir-faire, aim at blurring the boundaries between the roles of the organiser and the participants, generating an *active* form of participation. Articulated around the concept of citizenship, hence participation, the notion of political engagement, not automatic, emerges to a variable extent, as a gradual process and a quasi-naturalised *consequence* of a specific given social condition.

3.3 Organisation of the associative network: formal structure vs. empirical practice

While both associative networks have chosen to work within the constraints of cultural policy, the construction of cultural practice they facilitate is often inscribed in the framework of resistance to the heteronomy of state cultural policy, or at least a form of interpellation of authorities. In other words, the critique both Les Gamins and KMK have developed emerged essentially from the conscious will of this network to politicise their approach, which translates mainly into a significant contrast observed empirically between formal structure and grassroots practice.

Thus, it should be noted that for the purpose of the official discourse held to the secretary of state for the *politique de la ville* the residence-workshops set up by Les Gamins have been described in the quite consensual terms of ‘*apprentissage de la citoyenneté et de la solidarité*’.⁵⁴⁸ Yet in practice, the overall line of action appeared much more radical and political, taking into account living conditions, material realities, and social consciousness of the audiences during those residence-workshops, although the discourse around it was not necessarily explicitly radical or political. In other words, as an actor working in partnership with local state cultural initiatives, the action of Les Gamins could be perceived as a rather ambiguous form of opposition to cultural policy, or even a form of blind and unquestioning legitimisation. Yet it should also be noted that their actions steadily carry a radical critique of the state, particularly in terms of the existing cultural facilities, accessibility, and the discriminations the organisation detects in disadvantaged areas reproducing social exclusion. In political terms, while working *within* the state cultural policy framework, Les Gamins also displays a resolutely critical, anti-capitalist stance. A radical critique of commodified culture

⁵⁴⁸ ‘Note d’intention 2006’, in internal documents collected in archival research.

and social exclusion could be observed in the contents of the workshops, encouraging ‘*la participation de jeunes, communautés et artistes locaux à la vie culturelle et sociale de leur quartier pour des moments de liberté et de création dégagés des contingences de la société de consommation*’, not merely through opposition but thanks to the assertion of a positive, collective social practice, aspiring to cultural appropriation and social empowerment.⁵⁴⁹

As to KMK, throughout fieldwork observation, a contrast emerged between a formal structure featuring a terminology mimicking the corporate discourse, and the *habitus* observed in practice, closer to the grassroots community activist practice. The associative form for KMK could be interpreted as a necessary response to a quest for legitimacy, recognition and stability, as is the case for most institutionalised associations. This institutionalisation of an initially informal grassroots socio-cultural form equally constitutes a basis for development for that specific network as much as it carries a risk of bureaucratisation, but most of all, of deradicalisation – hence depoliticisation – of the initial intentions, particularly if, as in this case, it implies a financial dependency on the state. However, this contrast between discourse and practice, also observable in the case of Les Gamins (MR, VK), seems to signal that some militant associative networks use this approach deliberately as a form of activist strategy. In that sense, if this strategy makes the overall process much less visible and difficult to discriminate formally from any other form of SCA activity, adapting discourse as little as possible but to the necessary extent to a smoother, uncontroversial, and less political terminology required by the state funding applications is viewed by those collectives as a necessary compromise for diverting scarce state funding and re-allocating it towards projects more radical in practice.

3.4 Engagement citoyen or disguised associative activism?

In that respect, while the concept of socio-cultural animation is far from being new, the innovating features proposed by Les Gamins with the concept of *atelier-résidence* are anchored in a resolutely international conception of cultural exchanges at grassroots level, along with an underlying political ethos.⁵⁵⁰ For Jacques Pasquier, ‘*une économie humaine ne peut s’épanouir autrement que dans la restauration du lien entre culture et politique: à la fois politique culturelle et rénovation d’une culture politique*’.⁵⁵¹ Inspired by a self-management ideal, the action of Les Gamins has been construed not as a charitable

⁵⁴⁹ In *ibid.*

⁵⁵⁰ On socio-cultural animation, see *Agora débats/jeunesse* (2005), *op. cit.*

⁵⁵¹ ‘Moleque de Rua, info tour 2006’, in internal documents collected in archival research.

enterprise of relief, but as a re-appropriation one's own history, dignity and collective identity with both a critical and positive outlook, through recognition of popular culture, collective cultural practice, sharing experiences through popular education, and development of artistic practice: '*Nous sommes convaincus que la culture peut permettre aux groupes sociaux marginalisés de maintenir une cohésion sociale, et aux individus de trouver une identification positive qui se situe à l'inverse des conséquences de la non-insertion sociale et de la délinquance*'.⁵⁵² Refusing to be a sheer political alibi instrumentalised by the misery-focused (*misérabiliste*) social policies promoted locally by the state in the development of socio-cultural animation, the associative network has hence developed strong sympathies with grassroots activist campaigns committed specifically to fighting social exclusion (AC!, DAL, No Vox), and *altermondialiste* movements and global social forums (WSF in particular).⁵⁵³

Similarly, if the associative platform KMK is more of *social* type of commitment on a routine day to day practice, self-defined as '*militant et actif dans le champ socioculturel*',⁵⁵⁴ the collective expresses their politics more explicitly through artistic practice with the band Stéréotypes. If the lyrics of the songs often touch on the daily social condition of its culturally and socially marginalised protagonists, the resistant politics of the collective can be essentially inscribed in the history of KMK itself, tightly linked to the collective community dynamic, as well as the context of performance – the collective plays at many local militant events, supporting all kinds of networks and movements on the radical left (former Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, Bové supporters, Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires...). Dario (a.k.a. Mista) is also personally involved in migrant workers campaigns as a founder of a local branch of the Fédération des Associations de Solidarité avec les Travailleurs Immigrés (FASTI) in Toulouse, and engaged in campaigns against police brutality.⁵⁵⁵ In 2007, he released an EP entitled *Contrôle Surprise* denouncing police violence, and featuring a booklet edited by the FASTI, entitled *Code de déontologie de la police* for his audience. He is also involved in local activism in Toulouse, and has been regularly active in the Motivé-e-s dynamic.

Overall, the action of the tandem KMK/Stéréotypes contributes to bridging the gap between associative activism and socio-cultural animation, usually dependent on state and

⁵⁵² In 'Descriptif de l'association', retrieved at: <http://www.creerresister.org/Accueil.html>

⁵⁵³ No Vox is a overarching network of the *Sans*, activists considering they do not fit in, or are excluded from, the traditional structures of political struggle, such as trade unions or political organisations. See <http://www.no-vox.org/> See references and explanation above for networks AC !, DAL, and Act'Up, and WSF.

⁵⁵⁴ 'Présentation générale 2006', in internal documents collected in archival research.

⁵⁵⁵ See FASTI website: <http://www.fasti.org/>

often implying a level of decoupling from, or *incorporation* of, militant discourse, through an artistic practice mixing different strategies to approach their social environment. A key stake of their struggle, the collective views the concept of '*engagement citoyen*' as an essential term to re-appropriate and re-invest with more radical meaning.

3.5 The reconfiguration of citizenship as dialectical resistance to state heteronomy

Thus, the discourse of Les Gamins and KMK intends to reshape citizenship *within* a framework of heteronomy *vis-à-vis* an alleged state-defined notion of socio-cultural integration, yet the network simultaneously develops a resistance to this heteronomy by appropriating the notion of citizenship. Cultural practice, construed as a primary right to dignity and social recognition, hence as a source of social cohesion, is seen as necessarily generating a form of active citizenship. Yet in practice, a discrepancy could be found between a depoliticised, or not visibly political discourse, and a more radical practice, less visible as radical because of discursive nature and initial dependency on the state, but also more accessible to a wider public because of this very heteronomy. Les Gamins and KMK have chosen to develop this accessibility in order to enhance practices and participation of communities usually excluded from the realm of socio-cultural integration, as a form of appropriation of the cultural infrastructures provided by the state. In that respect, the notion of heteronomy understood in absolute terms may be a myth, since an assertion of a cultural specific, radical character *within* the framework of a resistance to the state could be observed in a space of negotiation of socio-cultural integration. Instigating a dialectical reconfiguration of citizenship, this process of negotiation prefigures in fact a return of political appropriation in the interstitial space of critique created by grassroots cultural practice.

In that sense, the politicisation of artistic practice and cultural discourse enables Les Gamins and KMK to work *within* a framework of heteronomy *vis-à-vis* state cultural policy while at the same time developing a discursive and pragmatic resistance to this heteronomy directly *in situ*, via an interpellation of state authorities on the approach that has been developed in the field of socio-cultural practice – in a sense, subversion from within. Not only does this dismiss an interpretation of the idea of state heteronomy in absolute terms, but more broadly, this *critique from within* also aims to pave the way for a more general process of debate and discussion at the heart of a reconfiguration of citizenship, emerging from grassroots communities themselves.

4. Strategies of disinvestment vis-à-vis the state: reclaiming autonomy as a activ(ist) form of citizenship

4.1 Local autonomy as collective cultural appropriation

With a self-defined *raison d'être* of 'free accessibility to music for ALL',⁵⁵⁶ the association Rasta Baboul (RB) was primarily set up as an infrastructure for the collective artistic adventure of the Tarace Boulba. Like the other associative projects of our selection, the operational dynamic is based on a tandem structure of an associative network (Rasta Baboul), more broadly involved in socio-cultural animation and local community life, and supporting the artistic collective (Tarace Boulba). In their day-to-day practice, the associative network facilitates collective music practice. The process of learning music is achieved through collective rehearsals where all musicians attending – beginners, amateurs, semi-professionals or professionals – can learn from each other. Rooted in the popular education tradition, this learning method generates an *active* social dynamic, putting everyone on equal footing. This positive human interaction also extends beyond the band itself during their performances, attempting to abolish the boundaries within the community between the different participants (i.e., artists vs. audience). This enables a re-appropriation and reconfiguration of ossified, rigid social roles and contributes to breaking the passive vicious circle of social exclusion.

The legal and administrative framework for the activities of Tarace Boulba, Rasta Baboul undoubtedly situate their practice in a collectivist logic: '*Aventure collective, association créatrice de lien social, dans une société marquée chaque jour un peu plus par l'individualisme et la mise en exergue de la réussite personnelle, l'association Rasta Baboul favorise la réussite d'un collectif*'.⁵⁵⁷ Based in Montreuil, the premises are viewed as a *living* space, hosting the association's office, but used also for rehearsals, or casual and free accommodation of its members. The basic operating mode endeavours to put into practice a collectivist ideal and address social and cultural exclusion. Members are granted life membership, providing a one-off subscription of 15 euros, and the only requisite to participate in the band is to learn the music pieces, and respect the minimal rules of living in a community:

Le principe de fonctionnement de l'asso est simple, essentiel: vient qui veut. En échange d'une signature et de 15 euros, vous rentrez à vie dans l'aventure. Vous participez à des ateliers de formation quotidiens et à la répétition générale hebdomadaire, vous disposez gratuitement des locaux de répétition, des lieux de

⁵⁵⁶ From back cover of *Merci pour le tiep* LP (Formidable/Fairplay, 2006).

⁵⁵⁷ 'Tarace Boulba: présentation', in internal documents collected during fieldwork.

vie, des possibilités d'hébergement, et surtout, vous faites des concerts. Les seules exigences dans tout ça:
 1- connaître les morceaux avant de monter sur scène, c'est tellement plus agréable pour le public,
 2- faire la vaisselle quand vous l'utilisez, parce que c'est aussi comme ça chez Tarace Boulba, le bien être et la survie d'un groupe passe parfois par la réalité d'une éponge mouillée.⁵⁵⁸

In truth, this collectivist musical practice of the associative dynamic is inscribed in an ideal of decommodification. The association is conceived as a collective aiming to play live music performances, while avoiding the business logic of a traditional band. Members are not paid individually for the performances, although the travelling expenses inferred by tours are covered as much as possible by the finances of the association. Attempting to operate as much as possible in financial autonomy, Tarace Boulba is based on voluntary work or participation, and minimising material needs. For instance, the purchasing of their own 55 seater tour coach comes from this logic of financial independence and minimising expenses while maximising possibilities of projects. Overall, all money fundraised or gained from live performances (fees or donations), record copyrights, or subscriptions (relatively marginal), are pooled back into the association's finances for reinvestment in collective projects. If the overall artistic progression of the band and the numbers of live performances (around 50 a year) may be more limited than for traditional professional bands, due to the voluntary, hence part-time commitment of its members and the huge number of participants, the volunteer-based dynamic develops an alternative form of cultural practice, putting forward the ideal of active solidarity, with the power of the collective dynamic facilitating turnover and division of labour and compensating for the market-driven imperatives.

4.2 Local autonomy as appropriation of socio-cultural legitimacy

Tactikollectif (TK) is a SCA collective which developed out of the success of fifteen years of associative cultural activism. Emerging from the initial association founded in 1982 in Les Minimes, in the North suburb of Toulouse, under the name Vitécrici, the band Zebda, a rai-rock-hip hop collective was formed by members and active participants of the association in the late 1980s as an *ad-hoc* requirement for a temporary animation (the making of a film).⁵⁵⁹ However, the band developed in the 1990s and met considerable commercial success, particularly with the album *Motivés, chants de lutte* (1996). Produced as an activist gesture to reclaim an *active* form of citizenship, the action of Zebda was already inscribed

⁵⁵⁸ 'Tarace, *Merci pour le tiep bio 2006*', internal archives collected at Tarace Boulba's main base in Montreuil in 2006-2007.

⁵⁵⁹ Zebda put a hold to their course in 2004, and regrouped then under different formations, such as *Mouss et Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées*, an initiative tightly associated with the project of the cultural association. The band reformed recently in spring 2011. See <http://zebda.artiste.universalmusic.fr/>

within a logic of an assertion of socio-cultural *difference*, and deriving from it, a form of political autonomy from the state logic of socio-cultural integration: ‘*L’aventure du groupe musical, plus citoyen que star, est inséparable de cette vie associative et du champ social: une définition de l’artiste et de son rôle social*’.⁵⁶⁰ Financially strong with the success of Zebda and *Motivés*, in 1996, this collective of childhood friends decided to disinvest state cultural policy and took the name of *Tactikollectif* to herald their financial and logistical independence. The network, comprising today of three full-time employees, self-defines itself as implied in ‘*la vie locale, la réflexion et l’action, façonnée de militantisme, de rencontres, et de proximité*’.⁵⁶¹

Remembered under the name *Marche des Beurs*, the *Marche pour l’égalité et contre le racisme* started in Marseilles on 15 October to finish in Paris on 3 December 1983, gathering over 100,000 people. Emerging mostly from the so-called *second generation* immigrants (from North Africa and to a lesser extent, Sub-Saharan Africa), the march was the first anti-racist action with a national outreach, heralding a huge movement of anti-racist activism in the following years and the beginnings of debates around multiculturalism around the emerging figure of the *Beur*.⁵⁶² Thus, after a long decade of experience of local socio-cultural animation, but involved from their inception in political activism as their participation to the *Marche des Beurs* revealed, the association had become an autonomously funded collective, developing a syncretic approach between political commitment, social participation, and artistic practice:

En coulisses s’appréhende la dimension politique de Zebda, profondément Tactik, tandis que la scène se réserve l’histoire d’une rencontre entre des artistes et leur public. De toute façon, individuellement, chaque membre est porteur d’une dimension artistique et d’une dimension politique, c’est-à-dire est amateur de créativité et tend vers une écriture collective de l’histoire.⁵⁶³

The aspiration to autonomy was therefore justified in the terms of a transition from the *associative* form to the *collective* logic:

L’ambition d’avancer ensemble est là depuis l’enfance dans les quartiers Nord de Toulouse. Toujours soucieux de la réalité sociale et politique, ces copains d’enfance se veulent riches des compétences du milieu associatif mais défendent désormais une indépendance, acquise par le disque *Motivés*, garante de l’originalité tranchante et politique. Dans le passage de l’associatif au collectif, la place est laissée à la réflexion sur de nouveaux modes d’actions ayant pour vecteur la culture. Le Tactik, c’est le sens de la recherche, de la remise en question dans la quête d’une identité nouvelle, dans l’efficacité et la souplesse, une manière d’imposer tranquillement une nouvelle façon de faire.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶⁰ See description of Zebda on Tactikollectif website: http://www.tactikollectif.org/article.php3?id_article=30

⁵⁶¹ In *La tactik collective, la revue du Tactikollectif et de Zebda* (Toulouse: Tactikollectif, c. 2002).

⁵⁶² See *Remue-mémoires: (op. cit); Bouamama, S. (1994). Dix ans de marche des Beurs: Chronique d’un mouvement avorté*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer.

⁵⁶³ See description of Zebda, *ibid.*: http://www.tactikollectif.org/article.php3?id_article=30

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Since their inception, the main actions of Tactikollectif have revolved around developing local cultural actions, aiming essentially '*faire passer les messages citoyens et démocratiques qui devraient régir la situation de chacun dans la société. Autant qu'il est possible de le faire par le truchement des festivités, le message unitaire - rappel du patrimoine commun- n'en vivra que mieux*'.⁵⁶⁵ More particularly, Tactikollectif has been mostly active through the organisation of annual festivals, such as *Ça Bouge au Nord* in the late 1990s, or since 2004, the festival *Origines Contrôlées*.

4.3 Mixed strategies: relative autonomy vs. limited scope of action?

Thus, Tarace Boulba and Tactikollectif have both developed their own approach to socio-cultural action. The material autonomy they have acquired over the years enables them to locally reclaim their collectivist ideals of equality and participation, as well as assert through their practice their social legitimacy as cultural communities. This is inseparable from an alternative conception of citizenship. Yet while both have are financially divested from the state funding allocated by local authorities towards cultural policy, the autonomy that both collectives have is essentially local, hence can only be understood in relative terms. First when confronted to the limits of the accessibility, visibility, and scope of their autonomous action, both Tarace Boulba and Tactikollectif have resorted to mixed strategies *vis-à-vis* state cultural policy. State funding could then be perceived as *ad hoc* sporadic aid for developing an autonomously run cultural project. Not only have both collectives had to come to terms with the paradoxes of success and expansion, wherein the ideal of non-mediated participation becomes more difficult to apply systematically, but they also had to reclaim their autonomy in cultural terms as an active – or activist? – grassroots practice of citizenship.

In Rasta Baboul's case, the latest grand endeavour of the associative network is a good example of these contradictions. The project *America Boulba* (2007-2010) featured an itinerary of ten stopover towns, starting in New Orleans, and following the *Mississippi Road* of musical migrations towards Memphis, St Louis, Kansas City, Fort Madison, Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, to finish in New York City. Fifty *taraciens* went on tour for six weeks in the spring of 2009, travelling over 3000 miles. The principles underlying the tour were the same experimented with previous travelling projects such as *Africa Boulba*: cultural encounters, artistic residences, and hosting the musical collectives

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

met along the way after their tour. In New Orleans, a city where music remains an essential feature of popular culture, and is shared in a non-discriminatory spirit, directly in the street, Tarace Boulba met with the brass band Hot Eight, who hosted them for an artistic residence, supported by the local Consulat Général de France. They participated in the Hessler Festival in Cleveland, and also hosted artistic workshops in New York City. In 2010, Tarace Boulba hosted the bands in France for a ten-day tour, featuring residences and three gigs in Sannois, Montreuil, and Nanterre.⁵⁶⁶ If the overall project partly self-financed, the association resorted to mixed strategies on this specific project considering its scope, resorting to private sponsorship (foundation Vinci) or funding from local authorities (Conseil Général de la Seine Saint-Denis, Mairie de Montreuil, service culturel d'Evry).

Close observation of the Tactikollectif case also deconstructs the myth of autonomy. The festival they put on every year, *Origines Contrôlées* is substantially supported financially by local authorities (Conseil Général de Haute-Garonne, Région Midi-Pyrénées, ACSÉ, Mairie de Toulouse) due to the considerable scope it has gained.⁵⁶⁷ In their aspiration to autonomy *vis-à-vis* state cultural policy Tactikollectif's discourse seemed inherently more independent, and potentially more politicised. Yet the collective also needed to be more opened to other forms of socio-cultural interaction in order to assert a legitimate form of grassroots, *de facto* citizenship. In practice, if Tactikollectif may initially have less visibility and accessibility than Les Gamins because lacking the infrastructure provided by state cultural policy frameworks, this is compensated by the fact that the collective resorts to the same cultural networks to organise its activities – working directly with cultural actors and infrastructures, community groups, local venues, grassroots networks, instead of via the mediation of state infrastructures proposed by local authorities. In that respect, the concept of autonomy should ultimately be construed as a relative notion, as social interaction is not only necessary but also actively sought by Tactikollectif, not *within* the framework of state cultural policy but necessarily interacting with its actors on the field.

4.4 Emancipation or alienation?

Political appropriation of citizenship as a form of autonomy

Thus, both Rasta Baboul and Tactikollectif could be argued to have a strategy of relative autonomy *vis-à-vis* state cultural policy, which is not radically dismissed but is avoided whenever possible. Autonomy is therefore viewed not as an alienating end in itself, but

⁵⁶⁶ See Hessler Festival website: <http://www.hesslerstreetfair.org/>

⁵⁶⁷ See interview with Salah Amokrane, Toulouse, 25th November 2010, in Appendix 6. ACSÉ: Agence nationale pour la Cohésion Sociale et l'Égalité des chances.

rather, as a means towards emancipation of expression *vis-à-vis* the heteronomy of dominant discourses. Beyond the degree of autonomy achieved *vis-à-vis* state cultural policy, both collectives have been observed to develop cultural practice in itself as a form of political appropriation of citizenship. In that sense, both collectives have complex and tight links to activist groups and political networks, and cultural practice is hence never politically neutral. Autonomy of cultural expression is seen by both Rasta Baboul and Tactikollectif as a necessary stage for putting forward an alternative vision of social participation and integration. Through their aspiration to reclaim a more active practice of citizenship, both bring about a form of politicisation of cultural expression. Yet if Tactikollectif seeks to develop a multifaceted approach to resistance and appropriation, with an explicit political bias (*parti-pris*) dynamic, Rasta Baboul reclaims citizenship through their very practice of solidarity with political networks.

The Tactikollectif have explicit and very close affinities with the political movement Motivé-e-s and the musical formations revolving around the collective Zebda, as some of the members belong to the three groups simultaneously. Emerging within the same social context and the same network of people, the movement Motivé-e-s, created in 1999, appeared as the political instance of the same grassroots dynamic.⁵⁶⁸ Reclaiming the idea of participatory democracy, the Motivé-e-s obtained four seats (12.38%) in Toulouse local council elections in 2001. A grassroots political movement emerging from the *quartiers*, they remained rooted and tightly linked to the cultural associative platform.⁵⁶⁹ However, the translation of the Tactikollectif dynamic into the realm of political representation clearly showed the collective as interpreting the idea of autonomy in relative terms. Notwithstanding strong critical reservations towards electoral practices of representative democracy, Motivé-e-s got involved in the process in order to develop the most direct form of participatory democracy locally. In that sense, it has been regarded politically as a halfway house between radically autonomous movements and alternative left networks, wherein the autonomous dimension is construed as a necessary stage towards social participation and political recognition, rather than a form of integration *per se*.⁵⁷⁰ It could be argued that by politicising

⁵⁶⁸ Visier L. and Zoïa G. (2001). 'Motivé-e-s. Les quartiers, la culture et le politique', *Mouvements* 18, Novembre-Décembre 2001, pp. 62-67.

⁵⁶⁹ While the Motivé-e-s collective dissolved at the next municipal election in 2008, and the overall dynamic has now refocused around a more global initiative called *Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires*, aiming to develop an 'autonomous political discourse' (*parole politique autonome*) emerging from the *quartiers*, ex-Motivé-e-s activists, Tactikollectif members and participants still support the grassroots political movement today. See <http://www.fsqp.fr/>

⁵⁷⁰ See Giraud, Baptiste (2005), 'Les Motivé-e-s de Toulouse à la frontière de la politique', *Cahiers du Grip*, 1, pp. 32-40. Retrieved at: <http://grip.free.fr/cahiers/1/giraudcg1.pdf>; Tilouch (2002), *op. cit.*

cultural expression, the festival Origines Contrôlées is yet another form of engagement in this process of reclaiming citizenship.

Set up every year in the autumn for a week of hybrid events – film screenings, artistic performances such as theatre or live music, and public debates with political officials, activists, intellectuals, artists, and the different communities, the festival Origines Contrôlées is presented as a '*festival engagé qui donne la parole et la musique aux thèmes de la mémoire de l'immigration et de la mémoire coloniale*'.⁵⁷¹ In this project, the dynamic of cultural action seems inseparable from an appropriation of politics. The political stance here lies in the claim to the legitimacy of postcolonial communities through the tribute paid to militant history and transmission of the memory of postcolonial resistance:

Avec une montée en charge progressive sur les thèmes de la discrimination et de l'égalité des droits nous espérons contribuer à faire progresser la reconnaissance du rôle de l'immigration dans la construction du pays. Les discriminations existent, et parce qu'elles puisent, entre autres choses, leur origine dans notre passé et la façon dont il a été traité - ou occulté -, nous avons voulu aborder les stéréotypes, le passé colonial, l'histoire de l'immigration. Comme base pour esquisser des solutions, nous avons tenté de mettre à plat et de nous poser les bonnes questions. Un festival ne va pas tout régler mais c'est un pas pour impulser une dynamique.⁵⁷²

Overall, the festival further entrenches a dynamic of complementary nature between cultural action and political commitment. In fact, Tactikollectif envisages the notion of socio-cultural integration under the auspices of social and cultural *participation* and reconfigure their own definition of citizenship from this framework. While the initial dynamic of socio-cultural animation, supervised by state cultural policy, heralded an aspiration to an autonomous political discourse, cultural expression remains one of the crucial means to engage grassroots communities politically. Reclaiming and reshaping actively the notion of citizenship, the relative autonomy of action Tactikollectif has in the festival and their overall cultural action facilitates a rehabilitation of popular sub-cultures still seeking legitimacy (such as hip hop or other urban cultures)⁵⁷³ or of repressed segments of collective history – and more specifically immigration history, particularly stigmatized today by an overwhelming '*injonction à l'intégration*'.⁵⁷⁴

As far as Rasta Baboul / Tarace Boulba is concerned, the link to a politicisation of appropriation is less explicit. While members are often individually involved in activism in

⁵⁷¹ See description of Origines Contrôlées on Tactikollectif website, retrieved at: http://www.tactikollectif.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=36

⁵⁷² In *ibid.*

⁵⁷³ In *Dossier de presse 2007* (internal archives). See also Hargreaves & McKinney eds. (1997), *op. cit.*

⁵⁷⁴ I am borrowing here the interpretation of Sayad by Hajjat. See Hajjat, A. (2005). *Immigration postcoloniale et mémoire*. Paris: L'Harmattan. See also interview with Salah Amokrane, Toulouse, 25th November 2010, in Appendix 6.

different trends of the radical left, the resistant politics of Tarace Boulba lies essentially in the band's own cultural practice. It should be stressed at this point that the lyrics often focus on an energetic denouncing of police abuse, racism and the police state. Nevertheless, as the texts are usually sung as a chorus, and surrounded by a lot of instruments, the text itself, hence discursive denunciation is not a priority for the band, as can be the case in hip hop, particularly *rap conscient*. Rather, Tarace Boulba situates resistance in the participatory dynamic of the artistic collective. In that sense, the band put forward positive demands and attempt to illustrate them through its own practice, to reclaim as accessible ideals the notion of collectivity, social gathering and bonding, solidarity, with the overall festive aspect instilling the idea of a dynamic or a movement to the process. The volunteer-based associative logic aiming at decommodification ties the artistic practice intimately with the concept of collective action.

For that reason, however limited its scope might be, the radical politics of Tarace Boulba becomes mostly visible in the context of their performances. Adapting their sound to all contexts (in the 'amplified' conditions of indoor venues or the acoustic context of street conditions), the band plays locally and internationally '*au hasard des envies et rencontres*': from local community festivals to playing in major venues in Paris (Cigale, New Morning, Glaz' Art, Divan du Monde), from animation in schools in Mali to the opening of Maison des Femmes Montreuil, from Fête de l'Humanité to a tour in rural France (Cévennes).⁵⁷⁵ Generally, Tarace Boulba undertakes to play *ethically correct*, i.e., play '*dans des endroits où la musique est trop rare (hôpitaux psychiatriques, cités...), dans un village rural pour participer avec les habitants à la réalisation d'un festival, dans les banlieues où certains se bougent*'.⁵⁷⁶ Extremely invested in the local community life, the band also supports other local associative networks, such as Montreuil Solidarité, for whom they played a *Tournée du Père Noël*, where the audience was asked to bring a toy as participation to the event, and the toys redistributed to disadvantaged youth for Christmas. Over an average of 50 dates a year, at least 15% are benefit gigs, for a variety of progressive causes on the left, usually associated with groups of third-worldist inspiration (such as Survie, or other campaigns against *Françafrique*, or the freedom of press in Niger) and the *Sans* movement (Act'Up, DAL and *sans-papiers* have been regular causes of mobilisation) but also for other political organisations or causes, such as the former Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) or even Ni Putes Ni Soumises (NPNS). They are also regular supporters of José Bové, for

⁵⁷⁵ 'Tarace Boulba: présentation', in TB internal documents collected during fieldwork.

⁵⁷⁶ TB *webreview*.

whom they played in Millau: '*groupe musical mais aussi groupe de soutien et solidarité, Tarace Boulba s'investit à l'occasion pour le droit au logement, s'engage pour les sans-papiers, les parias de tous bords, les démunis et les peuples du tiers-monde*'.⁵⁷⁷

For those 'heroes of alternative street culture', political *activism* is envisaged via the cultural resistance which they instil with an *active* practice, particularly visible in the *mobility* of the band.⁵⁷⁸ As a brass band, Tarace Boulba is primarily destined to play in the street, hence encourages mobile interaction between all participants, musicians and audience. Like many of our artists (JM, MAP, MR, VK), the street as a public and collective space, re-establishing equality of access to participation and socialisation, is an essential stake of re-appropriation for the band, favouring indirectly the political idea of freedom of circulation, via a displacement on the plane of cultural practice and artistic creation.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Conclusion. Critique as a space of negotiation of citizenship

To summarise this exploration, a contrast or opposition can be drawn between two approaches: on the one hand, interpellation of authorities within a heteronomous framework; on the other hand, disinvestment from institutional framework as an autonomous gesture. However, in the discourses and practices observed empirically, our case studies construed heteronomy or autonomy not in absolute but in relative terms. Entertaining ambivalent relations with state cultural policy, they adopt more complex strategies *vis-à-vis* existing cultural infrastructures, wherein a dynamic of resistance and a dialectical process of critique emerge as an interpretive space of negotiation of citizenship.

To conclude, within the context of grassroots associative networks, cultural practice could be argued to generate a form of resistance – whether it is situated inside or outside the limits of policy. This sets in motion a paradoxical dynamic of reconfiguration of citizenship, always redefined from the perspective of the grassroots networks. It could be further suggested that the dialectics of socio-cultural integration lies within the very heterodoxy of artistic practices, mostly experienced as a form of emancipatory autonomy for the differential gap, that they produce. All the same, as a crucible of social contradictions, grassroots associative networks lie at the core of a double-edged process of social appropriation, wherein cultural practices oscillate between an aspiration to radically autonomous expressions and a necessary interaction with a form of cultural heteronomy. This creates a ‘crack’ or interstitial ‘space between’, in which citizenship can finally be negotiated, insofar as those associative initiatives necessarily generate a process of constructive critique, along with active, popular participation, empowerment, or collective appropriation.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁹ As mentioned above, the *crack* is a term used by Holloway to describe those interstitial spaces. See Holloway (2010), *op. cit.* As to the ‘space between’, I am deriving this suggestion from a Castoriadian reading of the role of autonomy and heteronomy in the process of social emancipation. See Castoriadis, Cornelius (1986). *Les carrefours du labyrinthe II*. Paris: Le Seuil; Poirier, Nicolas (2009). ‘Espace public et émancipation chez Castoriadis’, *Revue du MAUSS*, 34 (2), pp. 276-298.

Conclusion. *Créer c'est Résister.*

Musical practices of emancipation and the ideal of autonomy

If you subordinate to corporate guys supplying you orders
You're fighting fire with fire, I'm fighting fire with water
When they kill me, I know I'll die with a focused mind
Plus there will be millions of me, ready to multiply
Don't just mention, acknowledge me, remember to honour me
My pen and this honesty, defending equality
Declared a republic, and ended your monarchy
Your corporate dictatorship pretends it's democracy
I hold your bloodline accountable for every crime
Adam Smith to Rothschild, it's all been a clever lie
Two choices now, revolution or genocide,
But thanks to Rupert Murdoch neither one will be televised
This album has been in the making a quarter century
Born to bless the beat and rap over recorded melody
I knew the truth since I was a small little boy
I am a product of the system I was born to destroy

Me can't believe I saw dem cheat people
And they fi protect and dem a leave people
I me no si no system fi di street people
Can't believe them ah lead people

The system needs to change right now
Too much a yut put in a grave right now
I no see the bigger is a give right now
After ghetto people a no steep right now (Woo ooh! oi!)⁵⁸⁰

Taken from an album entitled *Sountrack to the Struggle*, UK rapper Lowkey's words cited above echo a global tendency of politicisation of art and aestheticisation of activism pregnant in a number of recent developments of resistance. As the video for 'Live up' by Rodney P (shot during an anti-cuts demonstration in London in September 2011), or the one shot for 'For my people' by Logic (also using demonstration footage) illustrate, in these expressions of resistance music and politics inter-penetrate each other, construed as two sides of the same coin of revolt.⁵⁸¹ These recent developments in British grassroots musical expressions illustrate that the merging of artistic practices and activism in resistance has become a global phenomenon, not limited to the specifically French circumstances we have explored throughout this thesis.

⁵⁸⁰ Lowkey, 'Soundtrack to the Struggle' (*Soundtrack to the Struggle*, 2011).

⁵⁸¹ See Video for Rodney P feat. People's Army & Mighty Moe, 'Live up', retrieved at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXRjhlmbob_U; Logic, 'For my people', retrieved at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugAakqxRTgY>

The dynamic of emancipation in postcolonial France

This research has endeavoured to identify the extent to which political activism in contemporary France may be mediated and assimilated by cultural practices. A double-edged dynamic, cultural appropriation in postcolonial France is a constricted dialectic, developing within the restraints of assimilation by state ideology and hegemonic institutions on the one hand (Chapter I), and within the constraints of economic co-optation by market forces generating a concentration of contemporary music industries on the other (Chapter II). After examining the question from a theoretical angle, to better understand the mechanism of cultural appropriation and empowerment for musical resistance, we then introduced our specific selection of musical collectives (Chapter III). We identified the specific idiosyncratic context of cultural appropriation within postcolonial France, delineating the different networks, actors and spheres of resistance for musical practices. We then narrowed our focus to the politicisation of musical expression (Chapter IV). Within the constraints of ideological repression in France, wherein hegemonic discourse at best circumvents, but in most cases discards the postcolonial question, musical practices emerge for our collectives as a form of symbolic empowerment. This return of the repressed via artistic expressions opens up a space of politicisation of cultural resistance, which principally takes two not mutually exclusive forms. While *festive resistance* is essentially empirically motivated, *discursive resistance* essentially posits the seat of symbolic emancipation in language (Chapter V). An inescapable lever of emancipation for our collectives in their musical practices, the notion of autonomy is a key aspiration for not only our bands, but also for postcolonial communities in France more generally. Autonomy structures the processes of resistance and opens up a space of emancipation vis-à-vis the two main poles of domination – market processes at play in music industries on the one hand (Chapter VI), and the political control of the state over cultural production on the other hand (Chapter VII). The diversity and creativity our ten collectives deploy to convene spaces of symbolic autonomy proves that the process of musical resistance is complex, fragile and very difficult to conceptualise in systemic terms. But the heterogeneous, nuanced and idiosyncratic responses to polarised politics of repression and exploitation we have seen here are inscribed in a much broader trend.

The postcolonial blind spot: opening spaces of emancipation via symbolic displacement

To return to the main question of this research, the case of postcolonial France suggests that the mediation and assimilation of struggle by cultural practices is only one aspect of the

‘cultural turn’ taken by politics in late capitalism.⁵⁸² More essentially, this cultural turn is rooted in a redeployment of ruling class hegemony over the lower classes, crystallising in France around the postcolonial issue, a question which is energetically repressed by the official political discourse on national identity. Thus, the lack of recognition of postcolonialism stands out as the ‘blind spot’ (*angle mort*) we mentioned in the introduction, playing a key role in the reconfiguration of political resistance via the mediation or assimilation of cultural practices. The musical expressions in the postcolonial communities we have explored literally generate a crack in the hegemony of dominant discourses accompanying the development of neoliberalism in France. Paradoxically enough, it is the very relegation into that temporarily autonomous zone of the symbolic which secures a relative autonomy from incorporation and assimilation, and hence truly opens up a space for resistance wherein the political reconfiguration can take place.

Forms of musical resistance in contemporary France are ultimately opening up such spaces within which postcolonial communities themselves can determine and begin to construct the foundations for a form of postcolonial politics. The ten collectives we have explored throughout this thesis are situated within the foundations of such a space, offering a varied range of responses to the phenomenon of capitalist appropriation, and a significant expression of the transformative critiques of neoliberal globalisation. Such forms of critical expression play an arguably vital contemporary role within the wider struggle for social recognition, political dignity and a redefinition of appropriation in terms of symbolic empowerment for grassroots communities.

Symbolic empowerment as a new terrain: opening conceptual spaces beyond the thesis

Whilst it explores fragile and hybrid spaces of empowerment, this study also opens up conceptual spaces for development of further research, particularly in three specific areas. Firstly, the issue of symbolic appropriation via musical expressions would probably gain considerable scope from a thorough study of reception on behalf of audience and participants. Far beyond the modest aim of the present qualitative research, this would require an ambitious enquiry into significant numerical samples along with statistical and quantitative research – an endeavour probably easier to integrate into a collective research project.

⁵⁸² See Jameson (1998), *op. cit.*

Secondly, in terms of cultural production, it should be noted that relations between musical practices, music industries, and society at large have been considerably modified in the last decade by a steady decline of the record as a cultural object, contrasted with a soaring volume of Internet downloading, completely re-organising music distribution and diffusion at grassroots level. While such phenomenon has been evoked in our study, it is still a relatively recent process of transition, within which our artists are situated, a moment of crucial transformation for cultural industries.

Lastly, while the ground for postcolonialism in contemporary France still needs to be established, it could be suggested that all the processes observed throughout this study pave the way for a fragmentary yet consistent critique of identity politics. Departing from the ideal of emancipation via grassroots autonomy, the musical practices of our ten collectives mostly try to subsume the constraints of cultural assimilation and segregation. Working against the ideological vacuum generated by the denial of postcolonial communities, musical resistance in contemporary France has become a compelling weapon for stigmatized identities to access politics, by creating empowering spaces of collective resistance and social existence. ‘*Créer c’est résister*’: as the slogan of Moleque de Rua encapsulates, in musical expressions, resistance is practised, experienced in the very fabric of social life, a key to collective emancipation. Further exploration of such spaces and the utilisation of them by postcolonial communities may provide a more profound insight into the diverse and long-term possibilities of development, existence and recognition outside of, parallel to and within the wider fields of hegemonic political and socio-economic discourse.

Music resistance and postcolonial re-appropriation in a neoliberal world

This French dimension of musical resistance should not however be solely considered in isolation, or as a definitive benchmark for understanding the position music holds within contemporary social struggles. Examining the recent global resurgence of popular protest and its relationship with music, we can begin to see how forms of musical resistance are creating an international and independent space of communication, expression and solidarity, intertwined within various occurrences of popular protest and wider social movements. This has helped establish an implicit but consistent link between postcolonial issues and a critique of neoliberalism in the age of globalisation.

Following from a long-standing anti-colonial tradition, via third-worldism and *altermondialisme*, identification with an international struggle in musical practice seems to reconcile the notion of class with that of identity via practices of international claim for

equality and solidarity with the oppressed.⁵⁸³ In the UK scene of musical resistance, figureheads old and new such as Linton Kwesi Johnson or Lowkey have been identified with this globalisation of resistance.⁵⁸⁴ The case of Lowkey cited above, exemplifies how despite the decision to situate himself firmly outside the formal music industry – taking an almost confrontational stance – his recent album met with huge commercial success, bearing witness to this cultural transformation and political reconfiguration. The approach taken by Lowkey to social and political postcolonial issues is providing spaces from within which soundtracks of struggle emerge, produced in solidarity by artists from across the world. While performing together, those artists are not merely becoming part of global grassroots community networks, but are also steadily sharing thoughts, ideas and critique with wider worldwide communities at university, in national demonstrations and community spaces. Exploring such processes more profoundly could allow for a greater realisation and understanding regarding the huge potential and challenges lying ahead for global postcolonial communities of resistance.

⁵⁸³ See Agrikoliansky, Fillieule & Mayer eds.(2005), *op. cit.*

⁵⁸⁴ See Linton Kwesi Johnson website : <http://www.lintonkwesijohnson.com/>

Appendices

Appendix 1. Acronyms & abbreviations

Appendix 2. Narrating the empirical: portrait of the final ten case studies

Appendix 3. List of empirical activities undertaken (March 2006-Nov 2007)

Appendix 4. Recap table. Contextual settings & parameters

Appendix 5. Interview questions

Appendix 6. Extracts of recorded interviews (in French)

Appendix 7. Audio extracts

Appendix 1. List of acronyms & abbreviations

1. Self-generated acronyms and abbreviations used for Case Studies, and directly related associative or social networks

AASV:	Appel Aux Sans Voix
CCR:	Créer C Résister
JM:	Compagnie Jolie Môme
GDLAR:	Les Gamins De L'Art-Rue
Les Gamins:	_____
KA:	Keny Arkana
KMK:	KonicMistaKeys
LR:	La Rumeur
LRDP:	La Rage Du Peuple
MAP:	Ministère des Affaires Populaires
MH:	Mouss & Hakim
MHOC:	Mouss & Hakim <i>présentent: Origines Contrôlées</i> (project & artistic collective)
Mouss & Hakim:	_____
MR:	Moleque de Rua
OC:	Origines Contrôlées
OPA:	Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre
RB:	Rasta Baboul
ST:	Stéréotypes
TB:	Tarace Boulba
TK:	Tactikollectif
VK:	Voukoum

2. General acronyms

AC!:	Agir ensemble contre le Chômage
ACSÉ:	Agence nationale pour la Cohésion Sociale et l'Égalité des chances
ACLEFEU:	Association Collectif Liberté Egalité Fraternité Egalité ensemble Unis
AFAA:	Association Française d'Action Artistique
AFLIDD:	Association des Familles en Lutte contre l'Insécurité et Décès en Détenation
AGRIF :	Alliance Générale contre le Racisme et pour le respect de l'Identité Française
ATMF:	Association des Travailleurs Maghrébins de France
ATTAC:	Association pour la Taxation des Transactions pour l'Aide aux Citoyens
CAE:	Contrat d'Accompagnement dans l'Emploi
CCIPPP:	Campagne Civile Internationale Pour la Protection du Peuple Palestinien
CEE:	Communauté Economique Européenne
CES:	Contrat Emploi Solidarité
CFPE :	Collectif des Féministes pour l'Égalité
CIP (IDF):	Comité des Intermittents des Précaires (Ile-De France)
CFDT:	Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail
CGT:	Confédération Générale du Travail
CIMADE:	Comité InterMouvements Auprès Des Evacués
CMF:	Collectif des Musulmans de France
CNDP:	Comité National contre la Double Peine
CP:	Confédération Paysanne
CPE:	Contrat Première Embauche
CRAN:	Conseil Représentatif des Associations Noires
CSP:	Collectif Sans-Papiers
DAL:	Droit Au Logement
DJ:	<i>Disc Jockey</i> (hip hop practice)
DRAC:	Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles
ESF:	European Social Forum

ETP:	Equivalent Temps Plein
FAS:	Fonds d'Action Sociale
FASTI:	Fédération des Associations de Solidarité avec les Travailleurs Immigrés
FDG:	Front De Gauche (pour changer l'Europe)
FN:	Front National
FSQP:	Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires
FTCR:	Fédération des Tunisiens pour une Citoyenneté des deux Rives.
GONG:	Groupement d'Organisations Nationalistes de la Guadeloupe
IRMA:	centre d'Informations et Ressources pour les Musiques Actuelles
LCR:	Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire
LKP:	Liyannaj Kont Pwofitasyon
LLC:	Limited Liability Company
LO:	Lutte Ouvrière
MC:	<i>Master of Ceremony</i> (hip hop practice)
MEDEF:	Mouvement des Entreprises DE France
MIB:	Mouvement de l'Immigration et des Banlieues
MIR:	Mouvement des Indigènes de la République
MJC:	Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture
MNC:	Multi-National Company
MoDem:	Mouvement Démocrate
MTA:	Mouvement des Travailleurs Algériens
MTI:	Mouvement des Travailleurs Immigrés
MUC:	Mouvement des Utopies Concrètes
NPA:	Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste
NPNS:	Ni Putes Ni Soumises
PCF:	Parti Communiste Français
PG:	Parti de Gauche
PS:	Parti Socialiste
PT:	Partido dos Trabalhadores
RESF:	Réseau Education Sans Frontières
RUSF:	Réseau Universités Sans Frontières
RG:	Renseignements Généraux

SACEM:	Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique
SARL:	Société A Responsabilité Limitée
SCA:	Socio-Cultural Animation (from <i>animation socioculturelle</i>)
SCIC:	Société Coopérative d'Intérêt Collectif
SIRET:	Système d'Identification du Répertoire des Etablissements
SNEP:	Syndicat National de l'Edition Phonographique
SUD:	Solidaires, Unitaires, Démocratiques (Union syndicale Solidaires)
UDF:	Union pour la Démocratie Française
UMP:	Union pour un Mouvement Populaire
UNEDIC:	Union Nationale Interprofessionnelle pour l'Emploi dans l'Industrie et le Commerce
UPFI:	Union des Producteurs de phonographes Français Indépendants
UPLG:	Union Pour la Libération de la Guadeloupe
UTA:	Union des Travailleurs Agricoles
WSF:	World Social Forum
ZUS:	Zone Urbaine Sensible

Appendix 2.

Narrating the empirical, portraits of the final ten case studies

1. Jolie Môme
2. Keny Arkana
3. La Rumeur
4. Ministère des Affaires Populaires
5. Moleque de Rua
6. Mouss et Hakim *présentent Origines Contrôlées*
7. Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre
8. Stéréotypes
9. Tarace Boulba
10. Voukoun

Referent (related) groups

Regardless of the influence it has on artistic practice, the initial political mobilisation of our artists is primarily explained by their highly *subjective* experience of oppression. Biographical elements, and the individual understanding of one's own social condition, construct individual *narratives* which trigger a form of political awareness. Notwithstanding the pitfall of a personification of political commitment, an introductory synopsis of biographical order for each case study will be provided. Delineating the contours of cultural resistance through different profiles, our final ten case studies are, in alphabetical order:

1. **Jolie Môme** (JM), theatre company and street *chanson* collective;
2. **Keny Arkana** (KA), hip hop collective constituted around the artist Keny Arkana;
3. **La Rumeur** (LR), hip hop collective;
4. **Ministère des Affaires Populaires** (MAP), collective mixing hip hop and *musette* rock;
5. **Moleque de Rua** (MR), music collective mixing hip hop, funk, samba; associative network;
6. **Mouss & Hakim *présentent Origines Contrôlées*** (MHOC), artistic project around the singers Mouss et Hakim (MH), mixing rock, raï, and chaâbi;
7. **Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre** (OPA), rock protest song artistic collective;
8. **Stéréotypes** (ST), hip hop collective;
9. **Tarace Boulba** (TB), funk brass band collective, and associative network;
10. **Voukoun** (VK), Creole music collective, cultural movement and associative network.

1. Compagnie Jolie Môme (JM)

Created in 1983 by Michel Roger, Jolie Môme are a theatre company and registered association based in Saint-Denis comprising 11-18 members (depending on performance). They are resolutely committed politically on an individual level, with rotational and generational semi-stable membership.

The artistic collective introduces itself in these terms:

La Compagnie Jolie Môme c'est une troupe. Qui joue beaucoup, ses propres pièces ou un répertoire hérité de Brecht, Prévert... Qui chante souvent, sur les scènes comme dans la rue. Qui lutte parfois, pour ses droits ou en soutien aux autres travailleurs. Qui fait vivre un théâtre, La Belle Etoile à Saint-Denis. Qui monte un chapiteau, pour s'implanter quelques semaines dans une région. Jolie Môme c'est encore une association, dont les adhérents constituent autant de relais d'information et de mobilisation.⁵⁸⁵

Initiated to experimental, militant theatre in the effervescence of the post '68 street theatre of the 1970s, and influenced by the works of Ariane Mnouchkine and Antonio Díaz-Florián, Michel Roger founded the company Jolie Môme in 1983, named as a homage to the famous Léo Ferré song.⁵⁸⁶ Between 1983 and 1996, the company, based at La Cartoucherie in Vincennes, set up its first artistic productions: original creations (*Bâtiment K*; *Cabaret d'amour*; *Le tableau des merveilles*) along with adaptations from the works of Albert Camus (*Caïus*, adapted from *Caligula*), Bertolt Brecht (*La mère*; *L'exception et la règle*), Victor Hugo (*Le roi s'amuse*), or Jacques Prévert (*La famille Tuyau de poêle*), and started performing in festivals considered as countercultural institutions, such as Aurillac or in the fringe festival of Avignon.

Reclaiming the revolutionary tradition

Most members of Jolie Môme are determinedly involved in a wide-ranging variety of activist practices (from the syndicalism of relatively recent organisations, such as SUD, to more traditional trade unions such as the CGT or the CNT, from far left parties to issue-specific organisations). Reclaiming the legacy of Prévert's agit-prop theatre group *Octobre*, the company has developed in its productions a syncretic aesthetics enabling the merging of art and life, always with a critical perspective. Reclaiming both anarchist and communist historical legacies, Jolie Môme is strongly associated with both the communist and anarchist left and has developed an uncompromising aesthetics built on revolutionary cosmetics,

⁵⁸⁵ See Jolie Môme website homepage: <http://www.cie-joliemome.org/>

⁵⁸⁶ For more details about the history of theatre, street arts and street theatre in the aftermath of May '68, see Olivier Neveux, 'Théâtre' entry in Artous, Antoine, Epszajn Didier, & Silberstein, Patrick eds. (2008), *La France des années 1968*, pp 767-774, and Aude de Caunes, 'Théâtre et arts de rue' entry, in *ibid.*, pp 775-779.

always brandishing a large plain red flag and convening a gallery of protest and revolution figures, mainly dressing in red and black, in its performances.

Since 1999, the productions of the company have essentially focused on narrating the history of revolutionary resistance from the point of view of the working class, always with a critical but non-patronising slant, recounting not so well known historical sequences and thus enabling parallels with contemporary situations, as a clear '*incitation à la révolte et à l'insoumission*' aiming to fuel inspiration for contemporary resistance.⁵⁸⁷ With an idea of pedagogy of revolution and rooted in a tradition of popular education, the company provides introductory notes for all of their productions in the form of a mix of observations and comments gathered in a series of bulletins entitled 'Le Môme'. These productions, still regularly performed to this date, include: *Barricade* (set up in 1999) on the Paris Commune; *Je reviendrai et je serai des millions: Spartacus* (set up in 2002) on the slave uprising during the Roman Empire; *La crosse en l'air* (set up in 2005), adapted from Prévert, on revolutionary anarchist resistance during the Spanish civil war; *Gaïa et Prométhée* (set up in 2007). The latest production of the company, *Faut pas payer!* (set up in 2009), is adapted from the Dario Fo play about the Italian strike movement of the 1970s.⁵⁸⁸

Clearly anchored in what has since become the 'legitimist' tradition of revolutionary culture, the artistic process of Jolie Môme, who do not hesitate to resort to humour as a weapon of denunciation and cultivate irony, critical thinking, and a general mood of irreverence in its performances, is hence inextricably connected to, and informed by, a militant outlook on the world. For all these reasons, if the theatre company has affinities with all different categories of political or social movements involved in the resistance to neoliberalism, it has easily been associated with, or construed as the official cultural *standard bearer* of, 'traditional' *extrême gauche* parties such as the PCF or Trotskyist formations.

Music as a more spontaneous and transportable form of artistic expression

While from their inception, the company's productions have always featured a musical dimension that Roger acknowledged to be '*plus accessible pour le public que le théâtre pur et dur*', the company launched in 1996 the first of an annual meeting of revolutionary choirs, a week of workshops of singing practice between different revolutionary choir collectives

⁵⁸⁷ Quote extracted from a review by Le Monde Diplomatique of *La Crosse en l'air*; compiled in *JM webreview*.

⁵⁸⁸ Entitled *Can't pay won't pay!* in English.

converging from all over France.⁵⁸⁹ 1996 was also the year when the company set up its first *cabaret*, a production entitled *Cabaret Rouge* solely based on songs adapted or derived from the register of revolutionary tradition.

Commitment to political struggles and the artistic response

Mobilisations in political struggles are incorporated as a part and parcel of Jolie Môme's artistic activities. Broadening the potential modes and contexts of performance, the company does not hesitate to go on site to support struggles in solidarity: perform theatre plays during factory occupations, as they did in March-April 2007 to support the struggle of the JDC print workers, or play more mobile cabarets during specific demonstrations.⁵⁹⁰ But the company is also highly involved in struggles for their own survival, especially in the *Intermittent* struggle.

A structure based on solidarity and autonomy, recently established in Saint-Denis

Strongly informed by collectivism as well as the *autogestion* ethos, the company is mostly self-funded and self-managed. To counter the logic of capitalistic management, an equalitarian logic of co-operative collectivism is applied: all members, regardless of how long they have been in the company, get an equal share of the company's earnings. The copyrights for all productions (musical and theatrical) are claimed collectively, in the name of the company Jolie Môme, and music distribution is also self-managed, with the CDs being sold directly by the company to the audience, on site. Administrative tasks (such as promotion, accounting, and other secretarial tasks) are rotationally taken up by members of the company. To ensure the best possible independence vis-à-vis state local authorities (e.g., funding allotted by the *collectivités territoriales* in the framework of state cultural policy), the company resorts to solidarity and diversification of activities.⁵⁹¹ Jolie Môme is also supported financially by the railway workers trade union SUD Rail.

Since 2004, Jolie Môme has settled in a venue renamed *La Belle Etoile*, put freely at its disposal with no binding conditions on their activity by the town council of Saint-Denis.⁵⁹² Thanks to this new spatial stability, the company has regularly hosted talks, political debates,

⁵⁸⁹ Quote extracted from press releases collected during fieldwork.

⁵⁹⁰ On the intervention with JDC print workers, see video report at:

<http://regardeavue.com/index.php/2007/04/18/136-occupation-de-l-usine-jdc-la-cie-jolie-mome-soutient>

⁵⁹¹ The term *collectivités territoriales* is a generic term to call all the local administrative authorities regardless of their scale and scope, such as *Conseils régionaux* (for the *regions*), *Conseils généraux* (for the *départements*), the *communautés de communes* (for the local counties), and *collectivités locales* (usually town councils).

⁵⁹² According to Michel Roger. See interview with Jolie Môme, Saint-Denis, 8th April 2006, in Appendix 6.

with guest speakers from all nuances of the anti-capitalist left, radical cinema film screenings, events or workshops by other local cultural associations. La Belle Etoile is also a good place to find activist information, with all kinds of alternative press and leaflets for mobilisation on different campaigns available on site. The company also set up a number of weekly workshops (masks, theatre, singing) and occasionally accepts missions in other contexts (such as theatre workshops in schools).

Since 2006, the company Jolie Môme has also launched its own annual festival, *La Belle Rouge*, featuring alternative media, activist stalls and workshops, such as, for the 2008 edition, activist media *Radio Libertaire*, *Acrimed*, *le Plan B*, *Samizdat*; or activist collectives such as *CSP 59* and *Les désobéissants* who joined a mix of political activist debates, events and artistic productions of cultural resistance, such as popular theatre or music like MAP, invited to the 2008 edition.

2. Keny Arkana (KA):

Female hip hop artist originating from Marseilles, accompanied on stage by one DJ and 1-3 musicians (regular but not fixed musicians, performing backing vocals, acoustic guitar, occasionally acoustic percussion). For the purpose of this research, although Keny Arkana refers initially to a single individual, and the biographical details are only known for this specific person, the term shall be assigned to the deriving *artistic entity*, implying *collective* interaction in artistic activity and a broader social network.⁵⁹³

Precocious beginnings rooted in the experience of social violence (1982-1996)

Born in 1982 in Boulogne Billancourt into a family of Argentinean migrant background, Keny Arkana grew up in the neighbourhood of Noailles in Marseilles. Her rocky childhood notably featured episodes of running away from home following her father's death, resulting in a permanent placement in foster care centres in 1994 after dropping out of school (an experience recounted later by the artist in her songs, notably in 'Je me barre' and 'Hé connard'),⁵⁹⁴ where she started rapping for her foster care centre teenage peers in 1996.

From collective experience to personal commitment (c. 1996-2003)

Between 1996 and 2003, Keny Arkana gradually rose to artistic prominence. She attended hip hop workshops at the artistic *friche* La Belle de Mai, a springboard where she started rapping for a wider audience with her first hip hop collectives *Mars Patrie*, and *Etat-Major*. In *Etat-Major*, a collective reclaiming in its very name the consistent aesthetics of struggle in hop hip practice, Keny Arkana gained performance experience in the Marseilles underground scene, culminating in the 2003 release of *Etat Major*'s first mixtape.⁵⁹⁵

Alongside this artistic learning experience, Keny Arkana's eagerness to learn about her Argentinean origins heralded her political commitment, which she views as intrinsically connected to her cultural roots. When the Argentinean crisis exploded in 1998, she attended discussions and meetings and became more engaged with an *altermondialiste* analysis of globalisation, along with developing an interest in the Zapatistas struggle. Towards the end

⁵⁹³ Even if this artistic entity is fluctuant in its composition. It should be noted that out of all the ten cases studies, Keny Arkana is the only name designating an individual person. Yet this artistic stage name (the real name of Keny Arkana is publicly unknown) not only enables a broader collective to be articulated around an artistic entity, personified around a single individual, but also allows flexibility of the immediate social circle and the easy reconfiguring of its composition while at the same time protecting the identities of the individuals involved. Paradoxically enough, within this logic, the anonymity also enables to focus on the mobile and *collective* aspect of the process.

⁵⁹⁴ *Entre ciment et belle étoile* LP (2006).

⁵⁹⁵ *Etat-Major volume 1*, EP (2003).

of the period (c. 2002-2003), she started travelling to South America ‘to see things with [her] own eyes as [she] was afraid of idealising all this’.⁵⁹⁶ She started with Argentina, in her own family circle, before spending time in Zapatistas communities in Mexico (c. 2003-2004), where she met Subcommandante Marcos, and Brazil to attend the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2005.

The birth of solo projects

In 2003, Keny Arkana decided to start a solo career. She set up the label La Callita as a structure to keep her own artistic independence in her solo projects. With the release of her first single ‘Le missile est lancé’ (2004), and a year later, of her first *street album*, *L’Esquisse* (2005), Keny Arkana started gaining a wider audience outside the underground hip hop scene.

The experience of La Rage du Peuple, assertion of militant expression (2004-2008)

Alongside her solo artistic projects, Keny Arkana has developed her own political vision and militant practice, rooted in her local community of the neighbourhood of Noailles. In 2003, the closing down of La Maison de Daniel, a space of ‘reception and cultural exchange’, was the trigger for her to materialise her activist commitment more explicitly. Departing from the local mobilisation against the closing down of the cultural centre, the artist and a core of 8-10 friends set up the collective *La Rage du Peuple* (LRDP), as a defensive reaction against this instance of gentrification. Soon, the fields of struggle became much broader and required a form of political self-identification. This collective of disadvantaged youth from popular neighbourhoods, defined by default as a radical *altermondialiste* collective, grounds their identity in *difference*, and the uniting factor resides in the experience of *exclusion*, viewed as a common social condition, and a common disillusion with politics held in a universalistic rhetoric of a radical, grassroots *multitude* (in the Negrian sense) reclaiming the notion of *peuple*:

Nous sommes des jeunes, de cœur et d’esprit, habités d’un désir de transformer notre condition. Nous sommes des citoyens qui en ont [*sic*] ras-le-bol de voir nos droits et notre liberté menacés par une mondialisation qui nous incarcère dans une prison à ciel ouvert. [...] Nous sommes des gens du peuple qui ne croient plus aux politiciens, mais qui veulent redonner un sens au mot politique. Parfois nous nous sentons isolés, laissés pour compte et mis en marge de la société, exclus et non écoutés, nous ne rentrons pas dans le moule. Pourtant nous sommes un réseau de citoyens du monde et nous échangeons nos idées, nos expériences et nos alternatives, en dehors des partis politiques, ou des lobbies d’influence. Nous

⁵⁹⁶ Keny Arkana, audio interview in *KA webreview*, retrieved through <http://www.nuesblog.com>

venons d'horizons divers, de cultures différentes et métissées. Nous venons des ruelles sombres, des grandes tours, des ensembles dont l'horizon est composé de béton sans espaces verts.⁵⁹⁷

Following the November 2005 *banlieues* revolts, the LRDP collective, mainly based in Noailles and identifying overwhelmingly with the youth of immigrant descent, called for the creation of a *forum social des banlieues* as a channel to 'organise collectively in order to respond to the current situation of social, political and police violence'.⁵⁹⁸ Some of them also attended the first Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires in June 2007.⁵⁹⁹ This specific aspect of the collective's identity was again stressed with its contribution to the CPE movement in the spring of 2006. For LRDP, it was crucial to focus on the question of the links between the student and the *banlieues* youth. In January 2006, the collective participated in the organisation of the coalition 'Jeunesses en lutte', leaving it soon because of the political orientation of the coalition deemed too institutional.⁶⁰⁰ The collective was also visible in the occupied universities all throughout the CPE movement, as an attempt to use the movement as a platform to join different struggles, especially the *sans-papiers* struggle.

Thus, if La Rage Du Peuple was initially locally rooted, it has developed an internationalist and radical *altermondialiste* stance, aiming to generate a movement that spreads *de bouche à oreille telle une rumeur qui circule dans nos vies*.⁶⁰¹ The manifesto drafted in January 2006 by the collective summarises Keny Arkana's political position which she claims to be a form of *radical humanist struggle*,⁶⁰² which roots can probably be traced in the Zapatistas influence, combined with an idiosyncratic, autonomous tradition:

Nous avons décidé de nous unir pour pouvoir lutter humblement. [...] Nous sommes un peuple libre, debout, le poing levé. Nous souhaitons développer la conscience et l'information libre et critique. [...] Nous luttons contre les dictatures du capitalisme, le libéralisme et le jeu des puissants. [...] Nous combattons toutes les formes d'oppression de l'homme et de son environnement. Nous dénonçons les manipulations et les conspirations. Nous ne voulons pas rester spectateur d'un monde qui ne nous satisfait pas. Nous luttons contre les formes de pollutions qui nous empoisonnent. Nous sommes contre le pouvoir, inutile et destructeur, de quelques uns et contre le malheur de tous. Nous sommes contre l'exclusion, la répression et la discrimination. Nous sommes contre la dictature et la démocratie des élites. [...] Nous sommes pour l'autodéfense et vers la chute définitive du gouvernement. Nous voulons vivre libres. [...] Nous sommes pour la paix et l'autogestion dans notre environnement. [...] Nous sommes les acteurs de la transformation sociale, nous agissons local et pensons global, et nous souhaitons apprendre humblement [...] des luttes historiques. [...] Notre inspiration nous vient des révolutionnaires, zapatistes, sankaristes, guevarristes... Nous avançons vers plus de justice. [...] Nous allons vers une autonomie de chaque individu pour un meilleur partage collectif. Nous allons vers une décroissance joyeuse de la consommation. Nous sommes la rage du peuple, une rage positive, fédératrice, porteuse d'espoirs et de changements.⁶⁰³

⁵⁹⁷ LRDP manifesto: <http://www.laragedupeuple.org/>

⁵⁹⁸ In *KA webreview*.

⁵⁹⁹ Information collected from own participant observation. See <http://www.fsqp.fr>

⁶⁰⁰ See <http://marseille.indymedia.org/news/2006/01/4463.php>

⁶⁰¹ See LRDP manifesto: <http://www.laragedupeuple.org/>

⁶⁰² Keny Arkana, audio interview in *KA webreview*, retrieved through <http://www.nuesblog.com>

⁶⁰³ LRDP manifesto: <http://www.laragedupeuple.org/>

This initiative led the LRDP collective to create a ‘Zapatistas space’ in Marseille, while some members went to the World Social Forums in Bamako in 2006. The Zapatistas space was viewed as a form of local participation to the forum for the neighbourhood of Noailles, to implement the *altermondialiste* logic of ‘act locally, think globally’.⁶⁰⁴

Equally shaped by the tradition of local *associative activism*, the collective reclaimed to use any platform, including the musical scene as a form of *éveil des consciences*, investing popular culture as a means to create a movement of radical resistance: *Nous investissons la place publique, à travers les concerts, les médias libres, les espaces ouverts, les manifestations, les blocages de lieux symboliques...*⁶⁰⁵

Hence for Keny Arkana, this activist development has gone hand-in-hand with the development of her artistic project. Following from her first *mixtape* in 2006, Keny Arkana also worked on her solo album project, in the backdrop of this *altermondialiste* activism.

The first single of the album *Entre ciment et belle étoile*, famously entitled ‘La rage du peuple’ is a direct reference to the vision Keny Arkana and the LRDP collective have of *resistance*, wherein the boundaries between the political and the artistic expressions are intentionally not stated clearly. The video of the single, shot in the streets of Marseilles with LRDP collective and other friends of Keny Arkana in the spring of 2006, was posted and circulated on the Internet before the first album, *Entre ciment et belle étoile*, was released in September of the same year.

From Entre ciment et belle étoile to Appel Aux Sans Voix (2006-2007)

With the album *Entre ciment et belle étoile*, Keny Arkana reached out to a wider audience, selling over 40,000 copies within months of its release.⁶⁰⁶ A tour was programmed for the spring and summer 2007. Yet following organisational difficulties – which Keny Arkana summarised in interviews by saying ‘*les gens honnêtes ne sont pas très compétents et les gens compétents pas très honnêtes*’, the tour had to be cancelled. Keny Arkana decided to seize this opportunity to set up an original activist project called Appel Aux Sans Voix (AASV).⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁴ See <http://marseille.indymedia.org/features/espacezapatiste/>

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁶ By the end of 2007, the album had sold about 90,000 copies, and the mixtape *L'Esquisse* had sold over 60,000 copies. From KA *webreview*.

⁶⁰⁷ KA *webreview*.

From Désobéissance civile to L'Esquisse 2 (2008-2011)

2008 saw the release of a mini *street album*, *Désobéissance civile*, which summarises this experience. Here again, one of the specificities of Keny Arkana lies in a striking homology in discourse: hence, the political discourse, the lyrics of her songs and the answers to interviews are almost literally the same words (thereby making the interviews somehow superfluous). The latest album heralds a more stable political position on behalf of the artist. If the collective La Rage Du Peuple was dissolved in 2008, Keny Arkana continues to support autonomous causes, and has organised more autonomous militant street gigs, for instance in front of the Vincennes detention centre in support of the *sans-papiers* in the Autumn of the same year. On the whole, Keny Arkana thinks of the artist as endowed with a public responsibility: '*Pour moi, les artistes ont une mission, et quand on a la parole, il faut bien s'en servir [car] prendre la parole et un privilège*'.⁶⁰⁸ During her spring-summer 2008 tour entitled *La tête dans la lutte*, she has further emphasised the importance of radicalising discourse, as a call to re-appropriate political struggle through cultural expression. In 2011, the artists returned with a street album entitled *L'esquisse 2*, and the release of a new album entitled *Tout tourne autour du soleil* is scheduled for December 2012.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁸ Interview of Keny Arkana by Yacine Badday, *The Wrong Fanzine*, 2004, collected in *KA webreview*.

⁶⁰⁹ Keny Arkana, *L'Esquisse 2* (Because Music, 2011)

3. *La Rumeur (LR)*:

French hip-hop collective featuring two DJs (Kool M and Soul G), and four MCs (Ekoué a.k.a. La Poison d'Avril, Hamé a.k.a. Le Franc-Tireur, Philippe a.k.a. Le Bavar, and Mourad a.k.a. Le Paria), originating from Elancourt, Maurepas (Yvelines), and Perpignan (Pyrénées Orientales).

Influence and context: a genealogy connected to the birth of French hip hop

Created in the early 1990s, La Rumeur took shape in the context of a nascent sub-culture, short of a decade old, with codes still in the process of being settled. The band's influences and approach to hip hop are strongly inscribed in the context of the emergence of hip hop in France in the 1980s.⁶¹⁰ As La Rumeur themselves acknowledge, a whole generation was influenced by the radical style and protest tone of collectives like Public Enemy, which connect hip hop to political struggles from the start:

On est d'une génération qui a été marquée au fer rouge par Public Enemy, on avait 14-15 ans à la fin des années 80, cette musique replace le rap dans l'histoire des luttes et des résistances, c'est un art de pauvres qui doit être subversif. On n'est pas des nostalgiques, aigris, on est passionnés par les défis qu'on va avoir à relever: rendre au hip hop ses lettres de noblesse, réaffirmer son caractère populaire c'est à dire ancré aux préoccupations des quartiers populaires, de la base.⁶¹¹

From Ultime Coalition to La Rumeur – beginnings (c. 1992-1999):

All members of the band, except Hamé, lived in neighbouring areas in Yvelines, with some (Philippe and Mourad) knowing each other since primary school. In 1992, they formed a band called Ultime Coalition. At the time, the Parisian hip hop network was still a small world, and hip hop practice appeared as an underground sub-culture still accessible only to a restricted, initiated circle of amateurs. It is within this context that during an open mic night, Ekoué and Hamé met in 1994. Born in Perpignan, Hamé had recently moved to the capital to study at Nanterre University. He joined the band in 1995, and the formation was renamed La Rumeur. Reclaiming from those early days their artistic process as inscribed in the *underground* tradition, the early formation of La Rumeur occurred on the background of a rapid transformation of the hip hop scene in France. Linking up with rappers of the Time Bomb collective, La Rumeur also contributed to a process of musical appropriation of US hip hop, laying the foundations of an idiosyncratic French sound for hip hop, the band discarded the appellation of *rap français*, preferring the political claim of *rap de fils*

⁶¹⁰ For a good narrative of the birth of French hip hop, see Cachin (1996), *op. cit.*; Lapassade & Rousselot (2000), *op. cit.*; Hanak & Blondeau (2007), *op. cit.*; Bazin (2008), *op. cit.*

⁶¹¹ Hamé in interview for *Gasface* in 2002, in LR press review.

*d'immigrés: 'Jusqu'à la clique Time Bomb, les rappeurs français s'inspiraient de la scène US, vous étiez le premier groupe marquant à débarquer avec des influences "rap français", je pense notamment au Ministère Amer'.*⁶¹²

Within this context of a rapidly evolving sub-culture and a swarming of new talents, La Rumeur emerged essentially through *live* musical practice: on small or local Parisian scenes, featuring on other rappers' records, or performing *freestyles* for specific radio programmes – such as *Original Bombattak*, broadcast weekly on the local Générations 88.2 FM from 1996 to 1998, which contributed largely to the popularisation of hip hop in the Paris region.

La Rumeur as a figurehead of rap conscient (2000-2011)

If their own subjective experience of the postcolonial condition in France had endowed the collective with a 'natural affinity' to specific political issues – particularly the questions of police violence, and the struggles emerging as a consequence of decolonization, such as the campaign against *Françafrique* and the racialization of social relations – the collective is in fact considered politically committed in a few respects. First, the band willingly chose to ensure economic autonomy by setting up its own label, and not to resort or wish to resort to any of the mainstream media, in order to keep their integrity but, more importantly, to retain a high level of freedom to express their ideas explicitly, without self-censorship. Secondly, the cultural content of the band's artistic production (lyrics) and independent public denunciations (through self-produced promotional material) has materialised a link between the musical collective and political activists, particularly in grassroots militant movements in suburban France and on the question of *bavures policières*.⁶¹³ Their second and third albums, dark and corrosive, are informed by the intensely violent political censorship they were undergoing at the time.

More generally, the band belongs to a *rap conscient* tradition, featuring radical lyrics involving social and political denunciation, heralding a school of hip hop with a social discourse, born in the early years of hip hop:

La musique doit avoir en elle-même un côté pavé et action. Le style, c'est l'affleurement des idées. Fond et forme sont indissociables, sinon j'écrirais des livres, des tracts. C'est pourquoi la manière d'être le plus profondément politique, c'est de porter un message d'émancipation et de le véhiculer par le biais de codes qui incarnent cette émancipation... L'embourgeoisement des formes culturelles n'est pas inéluctable, même si j'ai bien conscience qu'on a tous un code-barres au cul.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹² Interviewer in *Gasface* interview in *ibid*.

⁶¹³ As is the case for the *Mouvement de l'Immigration et des Banlieues*. Although the audience of the band features an unusually high number of students, young intellectuals and militants, not necessarily matching the expected profile of suburban, postcolonial communities.

⁶¹⁴ Hamé in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, LR press review

With their involvement in a long-term court case against the state in a political battle over freedom of expression and censorship, the collective may be seen as directly implicit in political resistance, whether this was unwillingly caused initially insofar as this responsibility is publicly claimed today as political.

After the release of three albums and a long trial which they eventually won, the band has established itself as one of the figureheads of the renewal of *rap conscient* in France. Since 2008, La Rumeur has focused on solo projects. Ekoué and Philippe worked on the *Nord Sud Est Ouest* trilogy while Hamé collaborated to Serge Teyssot-Gay's project *Zone Libre*. Nonetheless, the band continues working together as La Rumeur, and the latest 2012 tour heralds new avenues and projects for the collective.

4. Ministère des Affaires Populaires (MAP):

Music collective set up in 2004, based in Roubaix, and comprised of 2 MCs (Saïd a.k.a. Dias; Kaddour, a.k.a. HK), 1 DJ and drummer (Stanko Fat, electronic beats and drum kit) and 2 musicians (Hacène Khelifa, violin; Jeoffrey Arnone, accordion).

Background: pluralistic cultures, hybrid identities

As front men, hence natural *spokespersons* of MAP, the story of the two MCs is better known than that of the other members of the band. As cousins, Saïd and Kaddour knew each other since their childhood. The first encounter with music as they were growing up occurred via the traditional mediation of parents, who were listening to a lot of chaâbi (popular Algerian music) and a bit of French *chanson* (Piaf, Brel), along with the initiation of elder brothers, who were particularly keen of what has been labelled *black* music: soul, funk (James Brown), reggae (Bob Marley), and the early stages of hip hop in France (IAM, NTM) – a plurality of popular musical forms which merged celebration and protest:

M.: Vous trouviez quoi dans la musique black ? L'aspect festif, quelque chose de politique ?

Kaddour: Tu avais les deux dimensions en même temps, à cette époque. Tu ne pouvais pas les séparer.

Même « Don't push me cuz I'm close to the Edge » : ⁶¹⁵ c'était une musique sur laquelle tout le monde dansait, mais le mec te faisait passer un message. C'est une histoire mêlée. À la maison, mes grands frères et mes grandes sœurs écoutaient Bob Marley 24 heures sur 24, c'était pareil: Bob, ça te faisait danser, mais c'était engagé. À cette époque, la question ne se posait pas. Tu avais bien une petite guéguerre entre hip-hop et new-jack, mais c'est tout. La séparation est venue après: plus tard, tu étais soit commercial, soit underground... ⁶¹⁶

If Kaddour wrote a few texts ('*un peu sociaux*') as a teenager, the two cousins only started rapping in their early 20s, a first step towards a political *prise de conscience* which stemmed from their own experience:

Saïd: Quand tu as 16 piges, tu es léger. Tu as des soucis, tu as des contrôles de police au faciès, mais ça te passe un peu au-dessus, tu essayes de penser à autre chose. Mais quand tu as 20 piges, la réalité te rattrape, tu t'aperçois que ce que tu vis, c'est l'injustice, tu t'aperçois que tu vis des choses que les autres ne vivent pas, tu t'aperçois que t'es d'un côté de la barrière... Et finalement tu te rends compte que tu as un outil, le rap, dans lequel tout est déjà là, de manière inconsciente. Tu baignes là-dedans, en fait... Même un mec comme James Brown, il commence alors à prendre une autre importance. La dimension politique, c'est à ce moment-là que tu la prends en pleine gueule. Tu attends d'avoir de la lucidité, tu attends d'avoir de la maturité pour pouvoir réellement le comprendre. Après, seulement, tu te dis: « Putain, mais c'est donc de ça qu'ils parlaient ces mecs. Et cet outil, le rap, ces mecs, IAM, NTM, finalement, ce qu'ils racontent, c'est ce que je vis... Moi aussi, j'aime faire ce qu'ils font, artistiquement ça me plaît. Moi aussi j'ai envie de réagir, moi aussi j'ai envie de raconter mes petites histoires, moi aussi j'ai envie de raconter ce qui me dérange, moi aussi j'ai envie de raconter ce qui m'énervé ». ⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁵ From Grandmaster Flash, 'The message' (1983)

⁶¹⁶ Tévanian, P. (2009), *ibid.*

⁶¹⁷ Tévanian, P. (2009), *ibid.*

The two cousins kept training at amateur hip hop practice throughout the late 1990s, getting involved in *ateliers d'écriture* and associative community life, gradually building their artistic practice and weaving cultural and social networks. In 2004, they gathered with other musicians (violin, electronic drum kit, accordion) to form the collective MAP.

Beginnings: merging popular musical traditions to reclaim a popular identity of resistance (2004-2007)

The social and ethno-cultural background has played a significant role in inscribing the band in a creative dynamic of merging different musical influences and practices (North African but also former Yugoslavian and Italian) into complex cultural idiosyncrasies. This cultural hybridity applies for the whole collective and stands out as a recurrent common thread in their practice. This process of syncretic appropriation generates a multifaceted musical identity opened on the notion of *cultural migration*.

MAP's first album, *Debout là-d'dans* (Pias, 2006) was immediately a significant *phénomène*, successful with a large audience. Often classified as *rap-musette* by critics, the music of MAP was appreciated from the onset for the *métissage* of musical styles (typical *ch'ti* Northern France accordion, *raï*, and working class hip hop). Also qualified as 'petits frères de Zebda', the band got noticed mostly for the unique tone of their *rap de prolo*, resolutely anchored in working class background, but never relinquishing a festive *saltimbanque* dimension, largely resorting to humour and mockery in their lyrics as a weapon of denunciation and endowing their music with a largely theatrical dimension when performing their songs on stage, improvising variations around their roles of mock 'Ministers'.

The irruption of a unique musical phenomenon (2008-2011)

Following the release of their album *Bronzés font du ch'ti* (2009) more explicitly militant, particularly around the Palestinian question, the band takes a break to open on solo projects. Since 2010, HK has set up the project, focusing on a 'citizen of the world' (*citoyen du monde*) outlook on the world, while Saïd and the rest of MAP have refocused on more explicitly political questions of postcolonial identity with the project ZEP – Zone d'Expression Populaire.

5. *Moleque de Rua (MR)*:

Brazilian musical collective created in 1983 by José Carlos Gomes Ferreira (a.k.a. Duda) in Vila Santa Catarina, a favela of São Paulo, comprising today of a community network of around 350 members. Now spreading internationally (mostly in Brazil and France), the collective usually feature nine to eleven musicians for their live performances.⁶¹⁸

Beginnings: a mischievous practical joke turned into success (1983)

Following a bitter frustration and disillusion from his experience of the PT (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, or Workers Party, a Marxist party founded in 1980 in São Paulo), in 1983, José Carlos Gomes Ferreira, lawyer, syndicalist and musician, decided to focus on artistic practice, and on acting locally for his neighbourhood in the favela of Vila Santa Catarina. He gathered a handful of kids aged seven to twelve from the vicinity and suggested setting up a band and taking part in a music contest during a festival in the favela. Not taking the contest very seriously and with no other resources than their creativity and energy, they made their own instruments with broomsticks, old pots and pans. For the occasion, they also adopted the name of *Moleque de Rua*, reflecting their intent of mischievous provocation, along with their social origin.

Literally translating as *street urchin*, the expression *Moleque de Rua* is also a reference to slavery, inscribed in the history of Brazil. Deriving from the word *quimundo* in the African language, meaning ‘child, kid, urchin’, the term goes back to the *Lei do Ventre Livre* of 1871 heralding transition between slavery and abolition.⁶¹⁹ This first generation of street population continued, in a Brazilian society which is still dominated today by inequalities, poverty and corruption. But the term *moleque* is also a reference to the *Misérables* figure of the *gavroche*: mischievous, creative, and resourceful, like the kids of the favela or disadvantaged communities.

Unexpectedly, *Moleque de Rua* won the contest, garnering attention and interest from the neighbourhood. At this stage the guitarist Oswaldo Gregório got involved and along with Duda contributed to setting up the foundations of the band.

⁶¹⁸ i.e., at time of writing: Duda, Oswaldo Gregório, Abel, Guigui, Heverton, Simone, Marcella, Cassio, all playing different instruments.

⁶¹⁹ Literally translating as ‘law of free belly’, the *Lei do Ventre Livre* was a law freeing newborns and requiring masters to care for them until the age of eight, at which time they would either be turned over to the government for compensation or the owner would have use of their labour until the age of twenty-one. In practice though, a lot of children were expelled and lived on the street. The Golden Law, abolishing slavery, was adopted in 1888.

Deprivation as a source of creativity: invention of instruments, musical crossbreeding and the rise to local prominence (1983-1987)

For the next five years, Moleque gradually developed the project, continuing to play in their neighbourhood in the same grassroots and *moleque*, mischievous spirit. The musical approach of Moleque, attempting to return to their roots and reinvent a musical tradition by covering all aspects of the practice - from musical instruments to musical compositions - stemmed from a lack of material resources. Therefore, the band started and has continued developing a creative and original strategy to overcome an initial (and long-lasting) lack of funds for instruments. Since these early days, the collective have invented an impressive number of musical instruments, especially percussions, inspired from the batucada and samba traditions, all made of bins, broom handles, cardboard, flip flops, and recycled material found in the streets, dumps, or junk yards of the surroundings of Vila Santa Catarina: from the *tambourinophone* (percussion made with several tambourines of different sizes) to the *chinelophone* (percussion made of big PVC pipes of increasing length, organised along the same principle as a Pan flute, and tapped with flip flops); from the *guitabau* (literally, guitar-box) to the *bateria de latas* (percussion made of tin cans and frying pans).⁶²⁰ Crossbreeding all kinds of Afro-Brazilian percussions and rhythms – samba, capoeira, batucada, maracatu – and drawing inspiration from a variety of musical genres – rock, funk, reggae, hip hop, the band gradually generated its own distinctive sound, celebrating the rich diversity of their cultural heritage, and playfully updating the syncretism of *marronage*.

Inscribed in the neighbourhood from its inception, Moleque has always been conceived as a ‘musical family’ – a formation gathering several generations, rooted into, supported by, and active through the wider local community, second family to many. In that context, the band’s gradual rise to prominence in Vila Santa Catarina and the surroundings during those early years could be construed as an almost natural consequence of their condition of existence and practice.

⁶²⁰ For iconography, see Les gamins website: <http://art.rue.free.fr/>

From self-production to major attention (1988-1991)

In 1988, Moleque de Rua released their first single and music video. The band also decided to compile a first album, self-produced, published and distributed. Five years of practice in the community could be summarised in the energy of the music and the tone of the lyrics in that album, not just a tough, caustic and aggressive denunciation of injustices, decrying poverty, corruption and violence, but primarily an assertion of the positive values of friendship, solidarity, independence, freedom, rooted in utopia.

Emerging on the international scene: Altermondialiste implication and the first European tours (1992-1994)

In 1992, Moleque came to play and participate in the first Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro, where Duda met Jacques Pasquier, third-worldist (later *altermondialiste*) activist, artistic producer, and later to become the founder of the French associative network Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue (GDLAR). The encounter was very striking, enthusiastic and fruitful for both parties, heralding the inception of long-term, thorough collaboration between the Brazilian collective and France. In the exchanges between Pasquier and Moleque, the idea of *residence-workshops* started emerging, and the following years would be devoted to building and consolidating this concept.

'Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue and the concept of residence-workshops (1995-2001)

In 1996, the associative network Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue was officially set up, as an infrastructure and tool for stabilising the tentative experiences in France and in the rest of Europe. The institution of Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue – direct French translation from *Moleque de Rua* – was linked to the reflexions and exchanges since their encounter. Following a period of implementation of the residence-workshop with Moleque de Rua (1996-2001), Les Gamins has over the years been working in partnership with a wide range of associations, festivals and cultural networks. The associative platform has been able to develop residence-workshop projects, organised tours, and produced artists, managing to mobilise funding from the Ministry of Culture and state local authorities.

For Moleque, this overall institutionalisation of grassroots projects through the Gamins structure has enabled the collective to stabilise financially and professionalise while remaining at the grassroots level. The band started coming to Europe about 6 months a year on tour, but also developed local partnerships in Europe, and mostly in France, to increasingly practice residence-workshops, also representing a financial and cultural source

of development for the collective internationally and locally, and still a main feature of the band's activities to this day. When on tour, Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue set up '*residence workshops*', wherein they could stay for about a week or more in an area – usually of economic hardship and social exclusion, with not many cultural facilities – and invest the community space and time to organise music workshops (making of instruments with recycled material, samba percussion workshops, etc). The funds raised from the European tours were usually invested to improve the basic living conditions for the band and their immediate relations.

On the Brazilian front, things also changed during that period. Since 1983, the 'street kids' had grown: between 1997 and 2000, some members left, for different reasons, and a whole new generation of Moleque musicians came in. In Vila Santa Catarina, the collective was still rooted in their belonging to their wider community, and an informal network of Moleque – soon to be called 'Friends of Moleque' – composed of ex-members, friends, close relations, participants to workshops, and other aficionados, started to emerge. With the funds gathered over the years, the band provided the minimum material in order to set up an associative place in their neighbourhood, called *Casa Do Moleque* (house of Moleque), which they built themselves with the help of the community, a place opened to all to practice and create spaces of social interaction.

Cr  er C R  sister: recent developments for the new Moleque generation (2002-2010)

Since the coming to the fore of the new generation of Moleque musicians, the band has continued to function along the lines defined by the collaboration with Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue. Since 2002, every year, Moleque has undertaken a European tour of residence workshops, in locations as varied as France, Britain, Ireland, Austria, Italy or Slovakia. Relying on the Gamins structure for logistical support in terms of administration, financial or resource orientation – hence partly decoupling management from their artistic activity⁶²¹ – endows the band with more freedom of creation while remaining as independent as possible.

Not relinquishing their support for the vision of another world, they have also participated to a few *altermondialiste* events, notably to the Universal Forum of Cultures in Barcelona in 2004 which drew out the *Agenda 21 for Culture*. The band also played in Trafalgar Square on the closing of the demonstration at the end of the second ESF in London in November of the same year. The year 2005 was also a particularly fruitful one: year of

⁶²¹ As is also the case for Tarace Boulba and Voukoum.

Brazil in France, Moleque de Rua benefited from the financial support of the Brazilian Ministry of Culture for their European tour.

Initially based on acoustic instruments and percussions, and later complemented by amplified instruments (electric guitar, bass, drums), the formation of Moleque de Rua has often enabled the collective to proceed to street parades of collective *batucadas*, in the Brazilian popular tradition of samba and carnival, another endeavour to reclaim the street.

6. Mouss & Hakim *présentent Origines Contrôlées (MHOC)*:

Beginnings and context

The two brothers Mustapha and Hakim Amokrane, born in Les Minimes, in the North suburb of Toulouse, first got involved in artistic and political practices with the band Zebda. A politically and socially engaged group, Zebda had organically come into existence in 1985 as the musical component of a Toulouse militant association, Vitécrici which encouraged youth participation through engaging them in various cultural practices. Such practices revealed a powerful ability to mobilise youth as well as to create bridges between the first generation of migrants and their children and to generate spaces and tools for the expression of the social exclusion experienced within the ‘host society’. The emergence of Zebda as a politically and socially engaged musical collective must be placed in the context of social struggles of the youth of immigrant background of the 1980s. Notably, the early 1980s saw a blossoming of politically radical musical and cultural initiatives, amongst which we can remember the 1980-1981 Rock Against the Police (RAP) project, which started organising public concerts in the *banlieues* – particularly in the Parisian area but later relayed in other French cities such as in Lyon and in the north suburbs of Marseilles – and circulating four-page leaflets publicising music bands from the *banlieues*, many of which had to resolve to rehearse in basements or staircases, and were thus particularly exposed to police harassment and violence. Through these gatherings, RAP allowed the youth from the *banlieues* to reclaim public spaces while providing opportunities for the whole community to gather. The 1980s were also the days of public appearance and claim making by youth from immigrant background and of the emergence and affirmation of a strong anti-racism movement in France. The 1983 ‘Marche pour l’Egalité et contre le Racisme’ (referred to by many as ‘Marche des Beurs’ or, emblematically, ‘la Marche’), followed the subsequent year by Convergence ’84 and the launching of the SOS Racisme’s yellow hand symbol of solidarity ‘Touche pas à mon pote’. These were decisive moments in the struggle of young people of immigrant background to be involved in the political life of the country and to demand equal rights. The emergence of this new, independent movement in French political life, laid down the terms of their struggle for justice and equality in a fashion still of relevance nowadays. This form of mobilisation, merging together associative, cultural and political dimensions, is strongly characteristic of Zebda’s, and later Mouss & Hakim’s, principles and practices of social and political action.

Early engagement

Zebda consisted of seven musicians and were largely influenced by their North African roots as well as music from all over the world (reggae, rap, raï, rock).⁶²² With lyrics dealing with issues affecting the North African population in France and advocating fighting for social equality, Zebda gained popularity and became increasingly associated with political engagement particularly around 2000. Most of Zebda members, including Mouss & Hakim, were active in a much broader community life network, through for instance the cultural associative platform and registered association Tactikollectif (TK), and their participations in other musical projects (notably 100% Collègues). The emergence of Tactikollectif is witness to the willingness of Zebda's members to develop alliances and to further the links between political, associative and cultural militancy.⁶²³ In 1996, their album *Motivés*, a series of rewritten traditional songs of political resistance,⁶²⁴ merged together the members' militant experience and expressed the band's support for grassroots networks around them. The album *Motivés* summarises a voluntaristic, militant approach to culture as an element of collective, political mobilisation, which will mark future projects and engagement of the members of the band. *Motivés*, a self-produced and self-circulated album, met a great commercial success with 200,000 sold copies. This album of '*chants de lutte*' anchored more resolutely Zebda in the anti-capitalist left side of the political spectrum, though members of the band expressed and lived their political engagement in different ways, with some officially affiliated with parties of the left and far left, and other more disengaged from institutionalised politics and focusing on local action and social struggles. Zebda's and Tactikollectif's synthetic approach to political, social and cultural resistance was further enacted with the organisation of festivals, starting in 2001 and occurring since on a yearly basis which regularly gather around 50,000 spectators.

Political activism

In 2001 a political movement called Motivé-e-s, consisting of people directly connected to the loose social networks around Zebda and Tactikollectif, and of which Mouss & Hakim

⁶²² It may be interesting to note that as several of the group's members are of North African descent, the name of the group, Zebda the Arabic word for butter (or *beurre* in French), is a pun on the use of the word *beur* in French slang to refer to North African youth, in particular second generation youth.

⁶²³ Amokrane S. (2007), 'Tactikollectif: action culturelle et engagement politique', in *EMPAN* 67, September 2007 (Fenouillet: Editions Erès), pp 46-49 . Also available on the Tactikollectif website: http://www.tactikollectif.org/#/article_282

⁶²⁴ Including for instance an interpretation of the Spanish anarchist song *Ay carmela*, the anti-Franquist song *Estaca* or the famous Italian revolutionary song *Bella ciao*. The production of the album was funded by the LCR.

were active members, was formed and won four seats on the city council with 12.38% of the votes (including Salah Amokrane, brother of Mouss and Hakim). The band remained tightly associated to this political initiative and its members still support the grassroots political movement today, which has now refocused around a more global initiative called Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires (FSQP). The political stance of Motivé-e-s was also influenced by the changing context of global politics: as of the late 1980s and particularly in the 1990s, the advent of global neoliberalism came to reconfigure political discourses and practices both globally and locally, and new forms of resistance emerged, particularly with the emergence of the *altermondialiste* movement.

Mouss & Hakim go solo

Following the split of Zebda in late 2003, the two brothers started working independently and released their first solo album, *Mouss et Hakim ou le contraire*, in 2005. In 2007, their second album, *Origines Contrôlées*, came out as the product of a collaborative project between the two brothers and seven other musicians. For the purpose of this research, if the benchmarks of Zebda and 100% Collègues may be alluded to, only the *Mouss et Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées* (MHOC) project will be considered fully. This is because these other artistic projects emerged out of different artistic formations, and involved different sets of people, different music labels, intentions and processes. The album consists in 13 covers of North African songs – notably Kabyle, the Berber community of Algeria – sang by and popular with migrant workers who came to France from the 1950s to the 1970s, and is described as a ‘*hommage aux chansons de l’immigration algérienne*’ by the musicians themselves. These songs belong to the rich North African tradition of singing absence and exile, solitude and political engagement, closely linked to the real social and collective experience of displacement in the second half of the 20th century. The album features songs by popular Algerian artists such as Slimane Azem, Mohamed Mazouni, Matoub Lounès and Cheikh el Hasnaoui: an integral part of the familial culture of Algerian migrants in France, these songs also used to be played in cafés where migrants workers gathered after work, in evenings or at weekends. As in Mouss & Hakim’s previous musical work with Zebda or 100% Collègues, *Origines Contrôlées* articulates a militant political stance in its claim for the recognition of the legitimacy of postcolonial communities. The selection of songs forms a tribute to the militant dimension of the history of migrations and participates in the transmission of the memory of postcolonial resistance.

7. *Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre (OPA)*:

Rock protest song collective and informal association based in Bordeaux, created in 2004, and comprising of a total of 29 members, with rotational participation to performances. If the literature and information on the collective is rather scarce, mostly due to its – partly voluntary – lack of visibility, a few essential features can be briefly sketched out.

The dynamic of rotational improvisation

Initially set up by a handful of musicians and gradually gaining more members, the two basic principles underlying the artistic practice of the collective rests in rotation and improvisation. With a potentially unlimited number of members (29 at time of writing), OPA comprises of mainly of musicians (several guitarists, bassists, drummers, and other musicians playing instruments as diverse as banjo, harmonica, saxophone, double bass, wind instruments, or acoustic percussions) along with a few other artists (comedians, photographs and visual art), and focuses on live performance based on improvisation (and in practice semi-improvisation).⁶²⁵ Deconstructing formatted music in a situationist apology of spontaneity as a form of creative emancipation, this original artistic principle enables the collective to have a different musical configuration for every performance. Not only the number of artists on stage and their specific area of artistic practice are always potentially different, but the performance becomes a sort of musical *happening* anchored in the *hic et nunc*, never repeated exactly from one performance to the next.

A collective figure of the artiste engagé or the renewal of an avant-garde?

Influenced by the rich French tradition of revolutionary songs, radical poetry, or simply *chanson à texte*, the collective merges eclectic rock, reggae, and *chanson* into a contemporary form of rock protest song, proposing unusual, improvised adaptations of texts by Artaud, Aragon, and songs by Barbara, Nougaro, Ferré, or even J-B Clément (*la semaine sanglante*), along with creations featuring original lyrics of protest and denunciation of contemporary injustices.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁵ A full list of the members of OPA and their artistic function is available on the collective's website: <http://www.myspace.com/orchestrepoetique/>

⁶²⁶ Like Jolie Môme, OPA proposed a cover of the song *la semaine sanglante*, in a very different version than the theatre company, more infused by reggae rhythms and rock sounds.

A syncretic implication of the artist into political resistance:

The band plays in traditional non-militant circumstances (gigs) but gets also involved in militant contexts. For instance, the band played fundraising or benefit gigs of solidarity with the *Sans Papiers* in December 2007, or took part in events such as a solidarity day of action to host the *Caravane Tabori* in September 2007, or the activist festival Festi 'Act in September 2008. The spontaneist practice of improvisation stands as an artistic metaphor for political struggle and direct action. If most members have strong left-leaning political sympathies, some are also individually involved in collectives of the radical left, particularly of the autonomous left (CNT and FA, along with the squat scene). Hence, the band's website and blog are used to relay militant information about all sorts of causes, from campaigns against detention centres (RUSF 33, RESF, *Sans-Papiers* movements) or for housing requisition rights (DAL, squat scene) to campaigns against police violence, repression and surveillance (FSQP, MIB, No Pasaran!) or of solidarity with Palestine (Génération Palestine).

One of the most involved members, the singer Myriam (a.k.a. 'm.') has also set up the collective *Hacktivismes*, an Internet citizen network of resistance to criminalisation of resistance, state surveillance and its increasing security policies, and the collective C.L.A.P 33 (*collectif bordelais Contre Les Abus Policiers*).⁶²⁷ She was also involved in the Appel Aux Sans Voix initiative launched by Keny Arkana and La Rage Du Peuple.

⁶²⁷ See C.L.A.P. 33 website : <http://clap33.over-blog.com/>

8. *Stéréotypes (ST)*: Hip hop collective created in 1996, comprising of three MCs (Konic, Mista, Keys), and 4 DJs / musicians (Dayon, base; Nico, drums; Sweet Ohms, samples; DJ Slices, turntables), based in Toulouse. Of essentially local scope and outreach, it also runs socio-cultural animation (SCA) activities in the framework on the registered association KMK. Formed in 1996 under the name KMK (KonicMistaKeys, derived from the names of the three MCs), the artistic collective set up its own cultural associative network, also called KMK in 1998. The name *Stéréotypes* came up in 1999 to clearly dissociate the artistic process from the associative dynamic. Anchored in street culture and hip hop tradition, the band has developed their own cosmopolitan and eclectic musical identity, incorporating instruments from other musical contexts, such as electric guitar, base, and drum kit, denoting the rock influence, and even features on one song ('Jolie Colonie') the accordion of Jean-Luc Amnestoy (of the *Motivés* musical collective).

Main activities and achievements of KMK: mixité, citoyenneté, cultures urbaines

In 1998, the three MCs set up a registered association, KonicMistaKeys Production (abbreviated as KMK) to formalise their neighbourhood hip hop activities, which has developed over the years and diversified its activities as a local network devoted to promote hip hop culture (with activities such as graffiti workshopss, music composition and production workshops in schools, community homes, youth clubs, or social centres). The associative network aims principally at achieving social integration and citizenship for the youth living in the disadvantaged outskirts of Toulouse through the recognition of 'urban culture(s)'. Reclaiming specifically the core values of hip hop – summed up in the slogan 'peace, unity, love, and having fun!',⁶²⁸ the collective highlights the festive and wilful spirit of a popular sub-culture. The main activities of the associative network revolved around three main types of interventions: cultural events, artistic workshops, and musical production.

The organisation of cultural events features regular hip hop nights, gigs, *free parties*, festivals – where the band *Stéréotypes* is often scheduled to play. For instance, in 2006, KMK has organised the 4th edition of the Juice Festival in the suburb of Toulouse, featuring hip hop battles and contests (in dance, graff and music), veejaying and deejaying, and a gig⁶²⁹, or the 4th edition of Street United, *festival de la culture urbaine*, in June and in

⁶²⁸ Classic formula to describe the aims of US hip hop at its early stages in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the street parties organised on the projects.

⁶²⁹ See <http://juicefestival.skyblog.com>.

September, set in lower class suburbs (Stadium, Les Argoulets) and featuring sports contests (street basketball, skateboard, BMX), and battles (graff, dance, music), DJs and gigs, and prizes to win (the first prize was a ‘price money’ of 6000 €). On a more regular basis, they have also been putting up *repas de quartier*, a night every month called ‘Ragtime’, or regular *free parties* (about 3 a year) entitled ‘Kamikaz Sound Systemz’, featuring funk and hip hop gigs. The association is also involved in co-organising ‘*des manifestations culturelles ou évènements de soutien pour différentes causes liées a des valeurs humanistes*’, such as a cultural event in June 2005 co-organised with two associations (ARA, Créoline) on the anniversary of the abolition of slavery, which brought in an audience of 200.⁶³⁰

Valuing the role of popular education for the youth, the association is also involved in SCA activities, chiefly targeting youth and taking place in schools and MJC. They offer weekly workshops in six disciplines related to hip hop and urban culture: and which often generate concrete productions, such as books, performances, or audio compilations. KMK has recently produced the CD *Le Pack Urbain*, compiling two years of workshops in foster care centres, and self-described as featuring youth aged 12-30 of all kinds of geographical, social and ethnic origins. For KMK, the SCA activities aim at *initier des vocations* as well as *conscientisation*, through a process of critical reflexion on one’s own social condition. Favours social *mixité* and artistic *métissage* to re-establish equality and direct democracy, those workshops are all attempts of a social emancipation through day to day appropriation of cultural *expression*.

Initially based from an already existing, informal community – as is generally the case for all associations – KMK has taken formal shape in order to develop and stabilise a cultural network. It comprises of around 40 to 50 active members (pay an annual membership subscription and taking part in the activities on a voluntary basis), and a few benefactor members (donating more than the set annual subscription) and honorary members (members for what they have done for KMK in the past). The association is run by two full time employees under CAE contract (one communication officer and one artistic project officer), and occasionally resorts to free lance employees paid *ad hoc* (hourly), usually for specific interventions in workshops or events. The association heavily relies on state subsidies for funding.

⁶³⁰ CAE: Replacing the CES (Contrat Emploi Solidarité), the Contrat d’Accompagnement dans l’Emploi, fixed term salaried employment financed by state local authorities, and regulated by the 2005 *Loi de programmation pour la cohésion sociale*.

9. Tarace Boulba (TB): Musical collective and registered association created in 1993, comprising 750 members, based in Montreuil. The collective, a funk brass-band, features 20 to 50 members on stage.

Beginnings: from Nègresses Vertes to the associative project (1993-1995)

Tarace Boulba was founded in 1993 by two ex-members of Les Nègresses Vertes, Mathieu Paulus and Joël Ruffier des Aimes. Rooted mainly in funk, but also interested in brass instruments, the two musicians sparked off a brass band of about 20 people reclaiming a funk heritage. The band also incorporated miscellaneous influences, such as '*des pulsions africaines, des relents gogo, une guitare juju, une cocotte reggae*'.⁶³¹ In 1994, the collective recorded their first cassette tape, disseminating their music locally. Between 1993 and 1995, the collective developed, and the idea of an associative form of functioning started to emerge. In 1995, the collective, organised as a registered association, set up their first rehearsal workshops, open to all, and a few *scenes tournantes*, flexible performances where musicians could rotate and easily jump in. In the same year, the band settled in their first premises and purchased their first coach to facilitate both local anchoring and wider mobility.

A la demande générale: self-production and métissage (1995-2002)

In October 1995, the band released their first album *A la demande générale* produced by the independent label Julisa, and which sold over 20,000 copies over the following years.⁶³² The late 1990s saw the expansion of Tarace Boulba in terms of numbers and activities.

In 1996, the collective moved to a new place in Montreuil in what is still their current base. Comprising 100 members in 1996, the association developed exponentially over the following 2 years, reaching 300 members in 1998. At this stage, the collective was faced with a huge demand of SCA activity, palliating the social shortcomings in their neighbourhood, namely, the deteriorating *lien social* due to the destruction of social solidarities. This unexpected state of affairs posed a dilemma for the collective in terms of organisation: '*Tarace s'est vite retrouvé victime de son succès et ses membres fondateurs confrontés aux choix de soit structurer le groupe sur le modèle de formations existantes*

⁶³¹ 'Tarace, *Merci pour le tiep bio 2006*', internal archives collected at Tarace Boulba's main base in Montreuil in 2006-2007.

⁶³² Running rapidly out of stock, the album was reedited in 1998 by the small label Formidable and distributed by Socadisc. Running out of stock yet again, the album was reedited for the second time by Formidable in 2006, and is currently distributed by Fairplay.

(signées par des maisons de disques), soit de continuer à accueillir les musiciens dans l'esprit d'un collectif ouvert'.⁶³³ The collective chose to focus on the latter option, and made the necessary arrangements to facilitate this process. In 2002, the Montreuil brass band moved their weekly rehearsals to the local venue La Pêche, a facility they still use to this day.

Grounding principles underlying the Tarace dynamic:

Multicultural funk brass band '*original par sa musique et son état d'esprit*', and transmitting '*une énergie positive, collective, réciproque, et une joie contagieuse*', Tarace has been described as a '*collectif musical au long cours où l'associatif, l'alternatif, le respect, l'envie, et l'énergie positive avancent ensemble*'.⁶³⁴

The self-defined *raison d'être* of the association is '*free accessibility to music for ALL*'.⁶³⁵ Aiming at '*réaliser, promouvoir et favoriser toutes formes d'expression artistique et culturelle auprès de tout public*',⁶³⁶ 'Tarace counts on each member to function in collective and reciprocal positive energy'.⁶³⁷ The notions of *collectivité*, *ouverture*, and *métissage* are the three key tenets underlying this '*auberge espagnole version musique [où] la mixité et le mélange servent de ciment au relationnel*':

L'association accueille des musiciens amateurs venants d'horizons différents. Pluralité ethnique (Noirs, Blancs, Beurs, Jaunes, Rouges, Verts,...) et professionnelle (intermittents du spectacle, cadres, infirmières, graphistes, journalistes, chômeurs,...), Rasta Baboul fédère les énergies. Tout musicien, peu importe son niveau, peut adhérer à cette aventure. Le principe de l'association étant de favoriser l'accueil du plus grand nombre avec un minimum de contraintes individuelles.⁶³⁸

The artistic formation: a flexible musical structure

The band itself is structured around the junction of two musical ensembles: rhythm and brass. The rhythmical basis features a Chapman Stick for bass and drums, hand percussions, bells, and congas for percussions.⁶³⁹ The Stick and drum kit are used only for the electric set, on stage in venues, while in street parades or for busking, the focus is put on the brass band aspect. The specificity of instrument choice, and more particularly, the use of the Chapman Stick Tarace Boulba makes on stage, emerges from a concern with precision in the merging of the funk (the Stick) with the brass band tradition, with instruments ranging from slide

⁶³³ From *TB webreview*.

⁶³⁴ *TB webreview*.

⁶³⁵ From back cover of *Merci pour le tiep* LP (Formidable/Fairplay, 2006).

⁶³⁶ *Tarace Boulba: présentation*, in internal documents collected during fieldwork.

⁶³⁷ Quote from the cover of the LP *Merci pour le tiep* (Formidable/Fairplay, 2006), italics mine.

⁶³⁸ *Tarace Boulba: présentation*, in internal documents collected during fieldwork.

⁶³⁹ See description of Chapman Stick above in Chapter III.

(trombone) to valved (trumpet, French horn) or even woodwind instruments (alto and tenor saxophone), along with flutes and subas.

This dual musical basis is complemented by a vocal section, usually implying a choir (chorus singing) and occasionally solos. Usually featuring 20 to 30 musicians in their performances, the overall ensemble enables a great deal of musical flexibility in terms of numbers and contents, and incorporates other musicians on the basis of improvisation, as the African musicians met during the Africa Boulba project, or for a common gig with Moleque de Rua at the New Morning (Paris) in 2002. Accepting ‘the greatest number of musicians of all ages and all levels of playing ability’, the band offers weekly workshops for each musical section (trumpet, trombone, saxophone, flute, rhythmical base, vocals, improvisation), and a weekly rehearsal for the whole band every Thursday at La Pêche.⁶⁴⁰

⁶⁴⁰ ‘TaraceBoulba: full presentation (English), Pdf available at: www.taraceboulba.com

10. Voukouv (VK): Registered association with annual membership emerging as a cultural movement (*Mouvman Kiltirel Gwadeloup*), created in 1989, rooted in Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe, and comprising of around 350 members. It typically features 15 to 20 performers on stage, and more during the *déboulés* (= *défilé*, street parade in Guadeloupian Creole).

A cultural dynamic directly anchored in the history of liberation struggles

The *Mouvman Kiltirel Gwadeloup* emerges directly in the backdrop of the collapse of liberation struggles. From that point, political nationalism initiated a clear retreat into cultural practice, trading political struggle for radical claims of cultural identity, and progressively shifting into a cultural form of nationalist struggle. If the Pointre-à-Pitre based collective Akiyo, set up in 1978, inspired Voukouv a great deal for their notion of *combat culturel*, Voukouv was the first emanation of this cultural transformation of nationalism in Basse-Terre.

The genesis of Voukouv: a movement founded on the principle of reversal (1988-1995)

‘GRAN VOUKOUM KILTIREL AN VIL BASTE’ – With this expression, the population of Basse-Terre, invited to a meeting in Bas du Bourg (*Badibou* in Creole) on 20th March 1988, heard the name of *Voukouv* for the first time. If the carnival, a vivid tradition for the Caribbean Creole population celebrated every year just before Lent (generally in February), had always been a particularly significant event for Guadeloupe, the 1988 edition of the carnival triggered the idea of a radical movement to reclaim Creole culture. Instigated by a heterogeneous handful of inhabitants of the lower class neighbourhood of Bas du Bourg, including former nationalist militants bitterly disillusioned by political struggle for independence, a reflection committee was set up for the creation of a cultural movement in Basse-Terre (or ‘*Vil Baste*’ in Creole).⁶⁴¹ The aim of the meeting and ensuing committee was to create *un Mouvement qui permettrait aux hommes et aux femmes de cette région d’être des acteurs participant au développement de leur propre culture au lieu d’être des spectateurs consommateurs de la culture, tombés dans une aliénation et un marasme qu’il est temps de briser définitivement*.⁶⁴² The carnival became the primary target and accomplishment of the blossoming movement of *conscientisation culturelle*. In the aftermath

⁶⁴¹ A strong similarity with the conditions of emergence of Moleque de Rua, very striking here, can only be highlighted at this point.

⁶⁴² All information extracted from *Voukouv, dossier de presse 2006*, internal archives collected at Les Gamins de l’Art-Rue’s main base in Le Mans in 2006-2007.

of Voukoum's unexpected success at the 1989 edition of the carnival, the nascent collective took the administrative structure of a registered association (*association loi 1901*) named 'VOUKOUM - Mouvman Kiltirel Gwadeloup'.

The meaning of *Voukoum* – a Creole term meaning 'uproar, hullabaloo, racket, commotion'⁶⁴³ – summarises the principle of reversal order underlying the cultural practice of the collective in order to preserve, promote, and renew *Gwadeloup*'s Creole popular culture:

VOUKOUM, en tant que Mouvement, est un désordre dans l'ordre culturel établi par les instances politiques, administratives et culturelles. C'est un désordre organisé, pour la mise en place d'un NOUVEL ORDRE CULTUREL prenant sa source dans nos racines fondamentales natales ancestrales (Traditions, Coutumes, Moeurs et Habitudes, etc...). C'est aussi la reconnaissance de la vraie valeur de la CULTURE DES GENS DE LA RUE, des VYE NEG (mauvais nègres) et en fait la valorisation des aspects populaires du PATRIMOINE CULTUREL GWADLOUPEYEN.⁶⁴⁴

Opting for a strategy of collective protest identity, and reclaiming an ambiguous political form of patriotism in a gesture which could almost be considered literally *conservative*, guiding principles underlying Voukoum (*Larel Voukoum La*) undertake to revisit, assert and revive the cultural heritage of Guadeloupe, which in their eyes have been repressed by the culture and codes imposed by the slave masters, later to become the colonial dominance of the *métropole*.

Main activities: revisiting cultural traditions

In practice, since their inception, the most intense activity of the collective during the year revolves around the time of *Mas*, (carnival), where they invest the street along with other *Mas* collectives. Researching the tradition of *Mas* (masks) which they reclaim during the carnival, Voukoum reappropriates the African tradition of the mask: for the person wearing it, the *mas* is much more than a sheer disguise, insofar as (s)he is meant to be possessed by the spirit of the mask, and become a *Mofwaze* (another being / the other). During the carnival *déboulé*, the usual configuration of the collective is around 50 musicians, 6 percussion masters, along with 2 cooks, although outside of this context, the group may be more restricted, to about 15 people.

⁶⁴³ Adapted from the *Dictionnaire Créole-Français* by Hector Poulet, Sylviane Telchid and Daniel Montbrand. Cited in *ibid*.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

From local to global: first international tours and recordings (1995-1999)

In 1996, Voukoum recorded its first LP, *On Larel On Lespri*, all self-produced and distributed by a small structure (Mélodie). The same year also heralded the beginning of their first tour in metropolitan France and their encounter with Jacques Pasquier of Les Gamins De l'Art-Rue. The associative network adopted with Voukoum a similar form of partnership they had already established with Moleque de Rua, contributing to the formidable expansion of the band. In 1998, the band played in La Villette for the fifth centenary of slavery abolition along with the festival Musiques Métisses. The band also started doing *ateliers-résidence* in different social environments (CCAS holiday centres, rural areas, lower class suburbs, etc). 1999 marked an explosion for the band, who intensified their possibilities on tour, and managed to record two other discs: *Lokans E Repriz* (Joab/Melodie, 1999), and *An Lari-la/ Trans-la* (Joab/Melodie, 1999)

The new Voukoum generation: recent developments (2000-2011)

More recently, Voukoum has seen the emergence of a new generation amongst their members. The sons of the founders of the movement now play with their parents, creating a continuum in the transmission of tradition. The band still comes regularly in France and Europe for residence workshops and live performances.

Resource (related) groups.

Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue: *Association* created in 1996 by Jacques Pasquier, comprising of 3 members (Pasquier, Fred, Audrey), promoting the recognition of popular culture, and providing human and material means to, and acting as an interface between, local movements or associations and politically or socially committed artists. In their struggle against delinquency and social exclusion they are generally rooted in socially disadvantaged areas (both urban and rural), and aim to generate 'spaces of encounters', social recognition and positive identification through the facilitation of workshops (*ateliers-résidence*), *repas de quartiers*, and collective productions and performances. Although they are not condemning any political organisation involved in the resistance to neoliberalism, their strongest sympathies lie with grassroots social networks committed specifically to fighting social exclusion (AC!, DAL, No Vox), and *altermondialiste* global social movements and forums (WSF in particular). They play the role of mediator between Voukoum and Moleque de Rua, and local communities when the latter groups are in France.

Motivé-e-s: *Association*, political movement based in Toulouse promoting the idea of participatory democracy, created under the impulsion of Zebda in 1999, who obtained 4 seats (12.38%) in Toulouse local council elections in 2001 (Isa, Michel, Salah, Elizabeth). Grassroots movement emerging from the *quartiers* (suburban popular or disadvantaged areas), they may be considered grouped under the broader category of 'political movements rooted in the *quartiers*' (comprising of MIB, DiverCité, Bouge Qui Bouge, *Le Petit Bard* movement, and supported by the Indigènes de la République) as a halfway house between radically autonomous movements (such as the MIB), and alternative left networks ready to get involved in the electorate practices of representative democracy despite critical reservation towards the way the latter is applied.

Tactikollectif: *Association de quartier*, founded in 1982 under the name Vitécrici, which changed name in 1996. Their objective is to develop local cultural actions (such as the festivals 'Ça Bouge au Nord', or now, 'Origines Controlées'), and they have explicit and very close affinities with Motivé-e-s and Zebda, as some of the members belong to the three groups simultaneously.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴⁵ For more detailed analysis, see de Caunes, Aude (2010), 'Tactikollectif, l'engagement citoyen entre contrechamp culturel et hors champ politique', in *Cassandra* 84. Winter 2010.

Appendix 3. List of empirical activities undertaken (March 2006 – Nov 2007)

Method:

Qualitative Research, involving snowballing method of data collection (deemed most adequate to grassroots networks context). Taking into account the general political, cultural, artistic, and intellectual context, fieldwork consisting mainly of 3 main activities:

- i. Observation (participatory or not, depending on context and type of experience).
- ii. Interviews (non-directive, formal, recorded and structured, or informal discussions, depending on format of interview and interview context).
- iii. Archival research (collection of public or internal documents relative to the case studies or of data relevant for specific contextualisation).

Reminder – 10 final case studies:

1. Compagnie Jolie Môme (JM)
2. Keny Arkana (KA) & related activist network Appel Aux Sans Voix (AASV)
3. La Rumeur (LR)
4. Ministère des Affaires Populaires (MAP)
5. Moleque de Rua (MR) & related network Créer C Résister/Gamins de l'Art-Rue (CCR/AR)
6. *Mouss & Hakim présentent: Origines Contrôlées* (MHOC) & related network Tactikollectif (TK)
7. Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre (OPA)
8. Stéréotypes (ST) & related network KonicMistaKeys (KMK)
9. Tarace Boulba (TB)
10. Voukoum (VK)

- **Case studies groups:**

	Observation	Interviews	Archival research
Jolie Môme (JM)	<p>- non-participatory: attended live performances in the following contexts & at the following dates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. music street performance in a demonstration during the CPE movement (Paris, 30.3.06) 2. live performance 'Spartacus' (La Belle Etoile, Saint-Denis, 6.4.06) 3. live performance ('La Crosse en l'Air') during at <i>Fête de l'Humanité</i> (La Courneuve, 14.09.07) 	<p>- informal: discussions with a few members during observation time:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. with 5-6 members during preparation of performance (La Belle Etoile, Saint-Denis, 6-8.4.06) 2. with 2-3 members around performance at <i>Fête de l'Humanité</i> (La Courneuve, 14-15.09.07) <p>- formal: recorded interview with 2 members (M. Roger, Pascale) (La Belle Etoile, Saint-Denis, 6 & 8.4.06)</p>	<p>- general Internet research (April 2006)</p> <p>- partial collection of specific documents (La Belle Etoile, Saint-Denis, 6-8 & 13.4.06)</p>
Keny Arkana (KA) & related activist network Appel Aux Sans Voix (AASV)	<p>- non-participatory:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1/ attended live performances in the following contexts & at the following dates: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. concert (La Mounède, Toulouse, 10.12.06) during the festival <i>Origines Contrôlées</i>, 3rd edition (Toulouse 5-10 Dec 2006) 2. concert (C.A.T., Bordeaux, 22.12.06) 3. concert during the day festival <i>Fête de rue Contre la destruction des Tanneries</i> (les Tanneries, Dijon, 9.6.07) 2/ attended AASV forums at the following locations & dates: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mix'Art Myrys, Toulouse, 21.4.07 2. CCO Villeurbanne, 25.4.07 3. La Générale, Paris XXè, 1.5.07 4. Café Culturel, Saint-Denis, 3.5.07 5. autonomous space along the 'Canal du Midi', Toulouse, 4.11.07 <p>-semi-participatory:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. spent two days with AASV members during the successive AASV forums taking place in the Paris area (autonomous social centre <i>Le château</i>, Montreuil, 10-11.5.07) 2. attended special police eviction of inhabitants of autonomous social centre <i>Le château</i>, including AASV members and subsequent local mobilisation (1- 	<p>- informal: discussions with many AASV members, with AASV forum participants, and with related networks on all observation occasions (Dec 2006-November 2007)</p> <p>- formal: collective interview with 3 AASV members – Myriam, Clem, Keny (autonomous social centre <i>Le château</i>, Montreuil, 10.5.07)</p>	<p>- general Internet research (Feb-March 2007)</p> <p>- partial collection of specific documents (April-June 2007)</p>

	<p>2.6.07)</p> <p>3. spent five days with AASV members in the preparation with other autonomous groups of discussions, workshops, performances, and self-managed events for the weekend event (Les Tanneries, Dijon, 7-11.6.07)</p> <p>4. spent two days with AASV members during forum in Toulouse (autonomous social centre <i>L'observatoire</i>, Toulouse, 4-5.11.07)</p>		
La Rumeur (LR)	<p>- non-participatory:</p> <p>I. attended debate with Hamé (La Rumeur member) hosted by Salah Amokrane on censorship and freedom of expression, about the legal case Mohammed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé of La Rumeur) vs. Ministère de l'Intérieur (Le Bikini, Toulouse, 18.10.07) during <i>Tactikollectif</i> festival <i>Origines Contrôlées</i>, 4th edition (Toulouse, 12-19.10.07)</p> <p>II. attended live performances in the following contexts & at the following dates:</p> <p>1. concert celebrating <i>Les dix ans de La Rumeur</i> (Le Trabendo, Paris, 6.6.07)</p> <p>2. concert at <i>Fête de l'Humanité</i> (La Courneuve, 15.09.07)</p> <p>3. concert (Le Bikini, Toulouse, 18.10.07) during <i>Tactikollectif</i> festival <i>Origines Contrôlées</i>, 4th edition (Toulouse, 12-19.10.07) in a event entitled '<i>Concert de rap en colère</i>'</p>	<p>- informal: discussion with Mohamed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé) during FSQP founding conference (La Bourse du Travail, Saint-Denis, 15.4.06)</p> <p>- formal: recorded interview with Mohamed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé) (interviewee's home, Paris XVIII^e, 18.6.06)</p>	<p>- general Internet research (April 2006)</p> <p>- specific Internet research on the current developments of the legal case Mohammed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé of La Rumeur) vs. Ministère de l'Intérieur (May-July 2007)</p>
Ministère des Affaires Populaires (MAP)	<p>- non-participatory: attended live performances in the following contexts & at the following dates:</p> <p>1. concert (La Mounède, Toulouse, 6.10.06) during the festival <i>Origines Contrôlées</i>, 3rd edition (Toulouse 5-10.12.06)</p> <p>2. concert during the <i>Grand Souk Populaire</i> festive event to support presidential candidate José Bové (quai de Loire, Paris XIX^e, 15.4.07)</p> <p>3. concert in an anti-racist event entitled <i>Pas de Quartier pour les Inégalités</i> (Le Transbordeur, Villeurbanne, 26.4.07)</p> <p>4. concert during regional <i>Fête de la LCR</i> (Ramonville, 19.10.07)</p>	<p>- informal: discussions with two members (Kadour a.k.a HK, & Saïd a.k.a. Dias)</p> <p>1. during the <i>Grand Souk Populaire</i> to support presidential candidate José Bové (quai de Loire, Paris, 15.4.07)</p> <p>2. after concert during regional <i>Fête de la LCR</i> (Ramonville, 19.10.07)</p> <p>- formal: recorded interview with Saïd (a.k.a. Dias) (café in town centre, Lille, 6.11.07)</p>	<p>- general Internet research (Feb-March 2007)</p>

Moleque de Rua (MR) & related associative network Créer C Résister / Gamins de l'Art-Rue (CCR/AR)	<p>- non-participatory:</p> <p>I. attended music workshops & public meeting with MR members for CCAS residents (Saint-Cyprien, 6-8.08.07)</p> <p>II. attended live performances in the following contexts & at the following dates:</p> <p>1. outdoor concert for CCAS residents (Saint-Cyprien, 6.08.07)</p> <p>2. concert during <i>Créer C'est Résister</i> day festival (Bataclan, Paris, 16.09.07)</p>	<p>- informal: discussions with a few members during observation time:</p> <p>1. with 3 founding members during archival research collection day spent at related associative network (<i>Art-Rue</i> office, Le Mans, 6.4.06)</p> <p>2. with a few members during other activities (Saint-Cyprien, 6-8.08.07 & Paris, 16.09.07)</p> <p>- formal: quasi-refusal or very strong reticence to accept formal recorded interview</p>	<p>- general Internet research (February 2006)</p> <p>- partial collection of specific documents (Le Mans, 6.4.06)</p> <p>- collection of specific documents (Saint-Cyprien, 7.08.07)</p>
Mouss & Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées (MHOC) & related associative network Tactikollectif (TK)	<p>- non-participatory: attended live performances in the following contexts & at the following dates:</p> <p>1. concert during a day of <i>AIDS prevention action</i> (Paris, 21.5.06)</p> <p>2. informal concert (La Mounède, Toulouse, 10.12.06) during the festival <i>Origines Contrôlées</i>, 3rd edition (Toulouse 5-10.12.06)</p> <p>3. concert to support the presidential candidate José Bové at a public election meeting (Parc des Expositions, Toulouse, 18.4.07)</p> <p>4. concert during the <i>Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires</i> (Quai de la Maltournée, Saint-Denis, 23.6.07)</p> <p>5. concert at <i>Fête de l'Humanité</i> (La Courneuve, 15.09.07)</p> <p>6. concert (TNT, Toulouse, 12.10.07) during <i>Tactikollectif</i> festival <i>Origines Contrôlées</i>, 4th edition (Toulouse, 12-19.10.07)</p> <p>7. informal and free street concert (place Arnaud Bernard, Toulouse, 13.10.07) during <i>Tactikollectif</i> festival <i>Origines Contrôlées</i>, 4th edition (Toulouse, 12-19.10.07)</p> <p>8. semi-formal concert 'Apéro d'Origines Contrôlées' in local bar (Toulouse, 14.10.07)</p>	<p>- informal: discussion with one musician— Rachid Ben Allaoua</p> <p>1. during Bové meeting (Parc des Expositions, Toulouse, 19.4.07)</p> <p>2. during <i>Fête de l'Humanité</i> (La Courneuve, 15.09.07) & during <i>Tactikollectif</i> festival <i>Origines Contrôlées</i>, 4th edition (Toulouse, 12-19.10.07)</p> <p>- formal:</p> <p>1. interviews with Moustapha Amokrane (a.k.a. Mouss):</p> <p>- 1st interview during 1st edition of <i>Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires</i> (Quai de la Maltournée, Saint-Denis, 23.6.07)</p> <p>- 2nd recorded interview during <i>Tactikollectif</i> festival <i>Origines Contrôlées</i>, 4th edition (Tactikollectif office, Toulouse, 18.10.07)</p> <p>2. interviews with one Tactikollectif official – Salah Amokrane:</p> <p>- 1st interview at Motivé-e-s office (Toulouse, 20.4.07)</p> <p>- 2nd interview during the 7th edition of the festival <i>Origines Contrôlées</i> (Bourse du travail, Toulouse, 25.11.10)</p>	<p>- general Internet research (July 2006; Feb-March 2007)</p> <p>- partial collection of specific documents (Tactikollectif office, Toulouse, 20.4.07)</p>
OPA (Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre)	<p>- non-participatory: attended a concert during the <i>Festival du Centre Interculturel de Bordeaux-Saint-Michel</i> (7è Etage Et Demi, Bordeaux, 14.6.07)</p>	<p>- formal: interview with one member - Myriam Erckert (interviewee's home, Bordeaux, 15.6.07)</p>	<p>- general Internet research on the related political network Hacktivismes (Feb-June 2007)</p>
Stéréotypes (ST) &	<p>- non-participatory: attended live performance during regional <i>Fête de la LCR</i> (Ramonville, 19.10.07)</p>	<p>- informal: discussions with one ST member & one KMK contact during observation time (Toulouse, October 2007)</p>	<p>- general Internet research (June-Nov 2007)</p> <p>- collection of specific</p>

related associative network (KMK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - semi-participatory: spent an evening with amongst others Dario Anatole (a.k.a. Mista), ST MC (Le Phare, Tournefeuille, 13.10.07) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formal: interviews with Dario Anatole (a.k.a. Mista) ST MC & KMK administrator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st interview at interviewee's home (Toulouse, 15.10.07) - 2nd interview at interviewee's home (Toulouse, 27.11.10) 	documents (Toulouse, 15.10.07)
Tarace Boulba (TB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non-participatory: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. attended a rehearsal (La Pêche, Montreuil, 8.6.06) 2. attended conference on the origins of funk by Meziane Belkacem, 'Funk, What is it?' & a concert during the festival <i>Glaz au Pays des Merveilles</i> (Glaz'art, Paris XIXè, 15.6.07) - semi-participatory: spent an evening with Tarace Boulba members (Tarace Boulba office, Montreuil, 5.6.07) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - informal: discussions with a few members during observation time <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. discussion with 1 member (Salem) during week of observation with Voukoum (Angoulême area, 23-29.5.06) 2. discussion with 2 or 3 members during rehearsal, archival research & performance (Montreuil & Paris XIXè, 5, 8, 15 & 21.6.07) - formal: interview with Rachid Ouāï, TB member administrator (Tarace Boulba office, Montreuil, 21.6.07) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - general Internet research (Feb-March 2007) - collection of specific documents (Montreuil, 5 & 21.6.07)
Voukoum (VK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non-participatory: attended the <i>déboulé</i> concluding a workshop in the community (Ma Campagne, Angoulême suburb, 23.5.06); debate around the theme of the <i>créolité</i> legacy, and performance during the <i>Musiques Métisses</i> festival (Angoulême, 25 & 27.5.06) - semi-participatory: spent a week with members for the 4th & final week of tour & <i>atelier-résidence</i> in the Charente area (Angoulême area, 23-29.5.06) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - informal: discussions with 10 to 12 members during observation time, esp. with 4 members (Fred, Robert, Philippe, Aristide) during <i>atelier-résidence</i> & the <i>Musiques Métisses</i> festival (Angoulême area, 23-29.5.06) - formal: strong reticence to accept formal recorded interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - general Internet research (April 2006) - partial collection of specific documents (Angoulême area, 23-29.5.06)

- Referent groups used in a looser, comparative approach with case studies:

	Observation	Interviews	Archival research	Reason for group not becoming case study:
129H	- non-participatory: attended a performance during debate with related resource group (<i>Cassandra</i>) (Le Lieu-Dit, Paris XXè, 9.6.06)		- general Internet research (June 2006)	- type of artistic practice too different (slam) - lacked formal interview or informal discussion opportunities during fieldwork phase
Casey	- non-participatory: attended live performances in the following contexts & at the following dates: 1. <i>featuring</i> in LR concert celebrating <i>Les dix ans de La Rumeur</i> (Le Trabendo, Paris, 6.6.07) 2. <i>featuring</i> in LR concert at <i>Fête de l'Humanité</i> (La Courneuve, 15.09.07) 3. concert (Le Bikini, Toulouse, 18.10.07) during <i>Tactikollectif</i> festival <i>Origines Contrôlées</i> , 4th edition (Toulouse, 12-19.10.07) in a event entitled ' <i>Concert de rap en colère</i> '		- general Internet research (Sept-Nov 2007)	- lacked formal interview or informal discussion opportunities during fieldwork phase
Kalash	- non-participatory: attended live performances in the following contexts & at the following dates: 1. concert after publicising FSQP activities (Bus Palladium, Paris IXè, 5.5.07) 2. concert during the <i>Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires</i> (Quai de la Maltournée, Saint-Denis, 23.6.07)		- general Internet research (May-June 2007)	- lacked formal interview or informal discussion opportunities during fieldwork phase
La Hagra Verbale		- informal: discussion with 2 MCs, Sirino & Lakdarino (Vaulx-en-Velin, 25-26.4.07)	- general Internet research (April 2007)	- lacked observation opportunities during fieldwork phase (esp. of any live performance)
Mista Rebel Lion (RBL)		- informal: discussions with main member (Motivé-e-s office, Toulouse, 18.4.07 & Mix'Art Myrys, Toulouse, 21.4.07)	- general Internet research (April 2007) - partial collection of material (May 2007)	- lacked observation opportunities during fieldwork phase (esp. of any live performance)

- Resource groups relevant for specific contextualisation:

	Observation	Interviews	Archival research
Cultural & artistic associative networks <i>(milieu associatif)</i>	Gamins de l'Art-Rue (AR) + Créer C Résister (CCR):		
	- day of observation (AR office, Le Mans, 6.4.06)	- informal: discussion with 2 members (Jacques Pasquier, Audrey) during day of observation (AR office, Le Mans, 6.4.06) & observation time with Voukoum (Angoulême area, 23-29.5.06) & Moleque de Rua at <i>Créer C'est Résister</i> day festival (Bataclan, Paris, 16.09.07)	- general Internet research (February 2006) - partial collection of specific documents (Le Mans, 6.4.06)
	Autre(s)pARTs + Mains d'Oeuvres:		
		- informal: discussion with 2 members (Alice; Franck) on archival research day (Mains d'Oeuvres, Saint-Ouen, 12.4.06)	- general Internet research (February 2006) - partial collection of specific documents (Mains d'Oeuvres, Saint-Ouen, 12.4.06)
	COUAC:		
		- formal: recorded interview with associative network official Laurie Blazy (Mix' Art Myrys, Toulouse, 19.4.07)	- general Internet research (April 2007) - partial collection of specific documents (Mix' Art Myrys, Toulouse, 19.4.07)
	Mix' Art Myrys:		
		- formal: recorded interview with associative network official Renan (Mix' Art Myrys, Toulouse, 18.4.07)	- general Internet research (April 2007)

Alternative cultural media & Intellectual networks	Réseau AG 45:		
	- non-participatory: attended public meeting on the survival and relocation of association (Le Grand Parquet, Paris XIXè, 15.6.06)	- informal: discussion with 4-5 members during fieldwork led at AG45 premises (AG45 premises, Paris XIXè, April-June 2006)	- general Internet research (February 2006)
	Les Périphériques Vous Parlent:		
	- non-participatory: attended following conferences or debates: 1. 'Travail & utopies sociales' (Le Lieu-Dit, Paris XXè, 14.6.06) 2. 'Le travail au miroir de l'art' in the conference cycle <i>Travail et culture: l'horizon des possibles</i> (Les Récollets, Paris Xè, 3.4.07)	- formal: 2 recorded interviews with associative network official Yovan Gilles (AG45 premises, Paris XIXè, 5 & 14.4.06)	- general Internet research (February 2006) - partial collection of specific documents (AG45 premises, Paris XIXè, 14 & 17.4.06)
	Cassandre:		
	- non-participatory: attended following conferences or debates: 1. discussion around the review (Le Lieu-Dit, Paris XXè, 9.6.06) 2. two-day conference <i>L'art en banlieue</i> , debate hosted by the review (Les Récollets, Paris Xè, 21-22.10.06)	- informal: discussions with a few members during observation - formal: recorded interview with chief editor Nicolas Roméas (Cassandre premises, Les Récollets, Paris Xè, 22.6.06)	- general Internet research (April 2006) - partial collection of specific documents (AG45 premises, Paris XIXè, 19-20.4.06)
	Vacarme:		
	- non-participatory: attended debate around the review (Le Lieu-Dit, Paris XXè, 13.6.06)		- general Internet research (April 2006) - partial collection of specific documents (AG45 premises, Paris XIXè, 21.4.06)

Political networks (autonomous political movements rooted in the <i>quartiers</i> or built on the postcolonial paradigm)	Les Indigènes de la République:		
	- non-participatory: attended the following: 1. day of mobilisation against the reform of immigration laws (République, Paris Xè, 2.4.06) 2. internal meeting (Le Soleil Levant, Paris XIè, 9.4.07) 3. public gathering around presidential elections (Place de la fontaine des Innocents, Paris IIIè, 14.4.07)	- informal: discussions with a few members during observation - formal: recorded interview with Youssef Boussomah (café in Paris XVIIè, 10.4.06)	- general Internet research (April 2006)
	Motivé-e-s:		
	- non-participatory: attended an intervention of Motivé-e-s members supporting the presidential candidate José Bové at a public election meeting (Parc des Expositions, Toulouse, 18.4.07)	- informal: discussions with Isabelle Rivière , Motivé-e-s elected member (FSQP site, Saint-Denis & various Paris locations, 23-24.6.07) - formal: 1. one-to-one recorded interviews with Malika & François Piquemal (Motivé-e-s office, Toulouse, 18.4.07) 2. recorded interview with Salah Amokrane, Motivé-e-s elected member (Motivé-e-s office, Toulouse, 20.4.07)	- general Internet research (Feb-March 2007) - partial collection of specific documents (Motivé-e-s office, Toulouse, 17-20.4.07)
	Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires (FSQP):		
	- non-participatory: attended amongst others following events or meetings: 1. FSQP founding conference (La Bourse du Travail, Saint-Denis, 15.4.06) 2. a few FSQP preparatory assembly conferences (Spring 2007) 3. feedback FSQP conference following the 1 st edition of the forum (Vaulx-en-Velin, 20-21.10.07) - semi-participatory: 1. regularly attended weekly meetings of the regional 'education working group' (Paris, April-June 2006) 2. helped out at regional FSQP stalls on several occasions (Paris, Toulouse, April-June 2007) 3. spent regular informal time with FSQP members (Paris, Lyon, Toulouse, 2006-2007) 4. contributed for a full week to organisation before, during, and after the forum (Quai de la Maltournée & Bourse du Travail, Saint-Denis ; other various Paris locations 19-25.6.07)	- informal: regular & frequent discussions and contacts with FSQP members (Paris, Lyon, Toulouse, April 2006-June 2007)	- general Internet research (Feb-March 2007) - collection of specific documents (Motivé-e-s office, Toulouse, 17-20.4.07; MIB/FSQP office in Paris, April-June 2007)

- **Other contextual political and social observations**

1. Global and altermondialiste context

Non-participatory observation to the several editions of European Social Forums (ESF):

- 2nd ESF in Paris, France (2003)
- 3rd ESF in London, UK (2004)
- 4th ESF in Athens, Greece (4-7 May 2006)

2. National context

Participatory observation to demonstrations and activist operations during the CPE social movement (28.3-15.4.06), and to political meetings, social forums, and festive events in presidential electoral context (3.4.07-6.6.08)

e.g.: Participation to *Grand Souk Populaire*, festive event to support presidential candidate José Bové (quai de Loire, Paris XIX^e, 15.4.07); election meeting of the presidential candidate José Bové (Parc des Expositions, Toulouse, 18.4.07); LCR election meeting (Salle du complexe sportif de la Reynerie, Toulouse, 19.4.07).

Or in non-electoral context:

e.g.: *Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires* (Quai de la Maltournée & Bourse du Travail, Saint-Denis, 22-24.6.07); *Fête de la LCR* (Ramonville, 19.10.07)

3. General context

Informal discussions and contacts with members of various political parties institutional movements (e.g., LCR, Motivé-e-s, Unis Avec Bové collective), social movements (e.g., CCIPPP, MUC, Convergence des Causes), trade unions (e.g., CGT, SUD), associative networks (e.g., COUAC, FTCT, FASTI, Convergence des Causes) autonomous networks (e.g., Résistons Ensemble, Rebellyon, La Rage du Peuple), cultural media, intellectually committed networks/reviews, etc

Appendix 4. RECAP TABLE: CONTEXTUAL SETTINGS & PARAMETERS

	1. Date created	2. Root location	3. Musical style - based on tradition /market subcategories - selection of 1 or 2 dominant features among the following: A: <i>chanson</i> B: rock (feat. funk, punk, ...) C: rap (or hip-hop) D: world music	4. Social form of organisation			5. Links to political context		6. Record production & economic structure				
				4.1 Legal framework: - LLC - RA: Registered Association (<i>de jure</i>) - IA: Informal Association (<i>de facto</i>)	4.2 Organisation of artistic practice: - fixed - flexible (rotational / generational)	4.3 Number of members on stage / in band (during music perf.) A: 1-5 B: 6-10 C: 11-20 D: 21-30 +	5.1 Formal: - Mil.: setting by members or entourage of political network - TU: Trade-Union membership - SCA: Socio-Cultural Animation, in local associative dynamic	5.2. Informal - open links with political networks (privileged links; not exhaustive list) - links with other case studies through cultural associations	6.1 Number of records produced:		6.2 Contract: M/Maj: <i>Major</i> Record Cie I/Ind: <i>Independent</i> Record Cie A/Auto: Self-production		6.3 Total estimate copies of records distributed* (in thousands): A: 1-10 B: 10-100 C: 100-1,000 D: >1,000 +
									LP / EP	Yr:	Production/ Publishing / Copyright (P) & (©)	Distribution	
J M	1983	Paris & North-East suburb. → now in St-Denis (93)	A: <i>chanson</i> (tradition of revolutionary songs, protest song)	RA: Theatre cie ‘Compagnie Jolie Môme’	Flexible: Rotational or /and generational, but relative stability of membership (members usually stay in JM quite a few years & 2 of 3 founding members still in JM)	C: up to 18. currently 11-13 actors - up to 7 technicians (depends on performance context)	> TU: - most JM also members of CGT or SUD - strong conflict vs. CFDT (w/ resulting court case)	Strong links w/: - Organised revolutionary left: seen as semi-official cultural mouthpiece for LO & LCR - Looser activist networks: e.g. CIP, AC!, <i>Sans-papiers</i>	LP	1998	Auto	Auto	B (c. 20,000)
									LP	1999	Auto	Auto	
									LP	2001	Auto	Auto	
									LP	2003	Auto	Auto	
									LP	2007	Auto	Auto	
									LP	2011	Auto	Auto	
K A	2004	Marseilles (13)	C: hip hop	IA (band)	Fixed	A: 4-5 1 MC 3-4 DJ/ musicians	Mil: founding members of - La Rage Du Peuple network - AASV forum	- Strong link w/ autonomous networks (esp. squat scene) - Pluralistic support of loose ntws (too many to name) - Links w/ TK (OC festival)	EP	2004	A (la Callita)	A (la Callita)	C
									EP	2005	A (la Callita)	A (la Callita)	
									EP	2006	I (Because)	I (Wagram)	
									LP	2006	I (Because)	I (Wagram)	
									EP	2007	I (Because)	I (Wagram)	
									EP	2008	I (Because)	I (Wagram)	
EP	2011	I (Because)	I (Wagram)										
M A P	2004	Roubaix (59)	B: rock C: rap	IA (band)	Fixed	A: 5 2 MC 3 DJ/ musicians		- Pluralistic support (LCR, Sans-Papiers, FSQP, CCIPPP...) - Links w/ TK (OC festival)	LP	2006	I (Booster/ WTPL/Pias)	Ind (Pias)	C
									EP	2009	I (Booster/ WTPL/Pias)	Ind (Pias)	

L R	1997	Elancourt - Yvelines 78 → now in Paris & broader suburb	C: hip hop	IA (band) & LLC (La Rumeur Records)	Fixed	B: 6 4 MC 2 DJ	Other (jud.): Judicial conflict vs. <i>Ministère de l'Intérieur</i> about freedom of expression; deliberate strategy to make court case a political question	- Strong link w/ autonomous networks (MIB, MIR, FSQP) - Links w/ TK (OC festival)	EP EP EP EP EP EP EP EP LP LP LP LP	1997 1998 1999 1999 2002 2002 2003 2004 2004 2007 2007	Ind (Fuas) Ind (Fuas) Ind (Pias) Ind (Fuas) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) A (LR Rcds) A (LR Rcds) A (LR Rcds) A (LR Rcds)	Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI) Maj (EMI)	C
M H O C	2007 Historical/ Subsid. dvplts: Vitécrici: 1982-96 Zebda: 1985- 2004 TK: 1997 MH: 2005	Minimes, Northern suburb of Toulouse (31)	B: rock D: world music (raï, chaâbi)	MHOC: IA (band) → yet tight links to TK (self- financed association set up by c. 10 founding members including some Zebda & MH artists; currently has 3 FT employees)	Fixed	B: 9	- Mil: Historically, MHOC entourage involved in Motivé-e-s local election experience (2001-2008) - SCA: 1. Historically, MHOC emerged from Zebda & SCA 2. Now: MHOC entourage involved in TK: conception of cultural resistance through self-run associative action aiming at cultural transmission, & civic action	Historically pluralistic & strong support of many initiatives: - Alternative left (Bové, LCR...): 100% Collègues project funded by LCR - Autonomous networks (FSQP) - Pluralistic support of many looser local activist networks (too many to name) [- Links w/ TK (OC festival)]	LP	2007	Auto (TK)	Auto (TK)	B Historical/ Subsid. dvplts: - Zebda = D - MH + TK productions (e.g., 100% Collègues) = C
M R	1983	Sao Paolo, Brazil & Le Mans (72)	B: rock (funk) D: world music (samba)	IA (band) → yet, tight links to eponym RA in Brazil & hosted in France by registered association GDLAR/CCR (2 founding members; 3 FT admin)	Flexible: Generational, but relative stability of membership (members usually stay in MR quite a few years & 2 of 3 founding members still in MR)	B: 9-10	SCA: > conception of cultural resistance through associative action: - self-run in Brazil - through assoc. GDLAR/CCR in France & Europe (workshops, residence...)	- historical links w/ Marxist left: one MR also member of Brazilian PT - today, distrust of traditional activism & anti- institutional stance: links w/ autonomous networks (cultural activist assoc.)	EP LP LP LP LP LP	1988 1991 1995 2000 2004 2007	Auto Maj (Sony) Ind (GDLAR) Auto Ind (CCR/ Naïve) Ind (CCR/MCK)	Auto Maj (Sony) Ind (Crammed) Auto Ind (Naïve) Ind (Naïve)	B

O P A	2004	Bordeaux (33)	B: rock	IA (performing arts collective)	Flexible: Rotational: every performance involves a variable number of the 24 members of the collective	A-B: 4-7 (typical number of artists on stage during musical performance)	Mil: major OPA member founded: - Hacktivisme alternative Internet media network + involved in AASV forum	Strong links w/ - Autonomous networks (esp. <i>libertaire</i> activists) - Pluralistic support of many networks	LP LP	2007 2008	Auto (Copy Left w/ Creative Commons) Auto (Copy Left w/ Creative Commons)	Auto Auto	A
S T	ST: 1999 history/ subsid. dvplts: KMK: - 1996 (as band) - 1998 (as assoc.)	Toulouse (31)	C: hip hop	IA (band) → tightly linked to KMK (3 founding members ST artists; now 2 FT employees)	Fixed	A: 7 3 MCs 4 DJ/ musicians	SCA: > conception of cultural resistance through self-run associative action > aiming at greater cultural access (events, workshops)	- Pluralistic support to many (LCR, FSQP, Motivé-es...) - Links w/ TK (OC festival)	LP	2007	Auto/Ind (KMK Prod)	Auto/Ind (KMK Prod)	A
T B	1993	Montreuil (93)	B: rock (funk) D: world music (brass band)	RA: w/ life membership (800 mbrs) run by 1 FT admin employee & volunteers	Flexible: Rotational & generational (with 2 of 3 founding members still in TB)	C-D: usually around 20 artists on stage but up to 80 on exceptional occasions	SCA: > conception of cultural resistance through self-run associative action > aiming at accessibility to culture through music production (workshops, events)	Strong links w/ - Autonomous networks (esp. <i>libertaire</i> activists) - Pluralistic support of many looser networks	Ta pe LP LP LP	1993 2000 2006 2006	Auto Ind (Formidable/ Fairplay) Ind (Formidable/ Fairplay) Ind (Formidable/ Fairplay)	Auto Ind (Socadisc) Ind (Socadisc) Ind (Socadisc)	B
V K	1988	Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe (97)	D: world music (Afro-Caribbean & carnival tradition)	RA: w/ annual membership (c. 300-400 members; run by & volunteers	Flexible: Generational, but relative stability of membership (members usually stay in VK quite a few years & 2 of 3 founding members still in VK)	C-D: usually around 20 artists on stage but up to 300 performers on street on <i>déboulés</i> (carnival) occasions	SCA: > conception of cultural resistance through associative action: - self-run in Guadeloupe - through assoc. AR/CCR in France (workshops, residence...) > claiming Creole legacy	General distrust of traditional activism & anti- institutional stance: links w/ autonomous networks (local cultural activist assoc. networks)	LP LP EP	1996 1999 2001	Auto Ind (Joab) Ind (Joab)	Ind (Melodie) Ind (Melodie) Ind (Melodie)	B

*The threshold of profitability for a record (LP/EP) for both record companies and artists, is estimated at about 100,000 copies sold. It may hence symbolise a professional threshold, although this marker does not take into account a) all other sources of income for artists (live performance; merchandising; workshops in artists are involved in SCA); b) some involuntary or voluntary (Copy Left) policies of distribution (typically via the Internet). Overall, from the perspective of resistance, it could also be argued that it only reinforces the competitive logic of capitalist rule, self-fulfilling the prophecy – or ideology – of omnipotent market rule. See Curien & Moreau (2006), *op.cit.*

Appendix 5.

Broad guidelines & themes for interview questions

As these questions were considered broad thematic guidelines to design interview questions individually and differentially for every case study, their relevance had to be moderated. Consequently certain questions were altogether discarded while other specific questions were be added prior to, or during the course of the interview.

1. Definitions, terminology

1.1 Committed artistic practices

1. How would you define your art / style?
2. How would you define committed art?
Do you consider yourself a politically committed act?
3. What are you committed to defend, and how?
4. What specific elements of you artistic practice would you consider to be contributing to a political commitment to a resistance to neoliberalism: the texts or way you perform?
 - Have you done artistic productions in favour of a social or political cause (live performances during demonstrations or in explicitly militant context...)?
 - Have you done workshops you organise in your community or disadvantaged communities or are you engaged in socio-cultural activism through associative network practice?
 - Do you consider that what contributes most to a political or social resistance is what you do outside of your artistic activity (either openly under the name or your group, or privately), e.g.:
 - (i) occasional media intervention in favour of a cause (petitions, declarations...)
 - (ii) militant activity or political position (privately or openly stated)
 - (iii) involvement into local council activities privately; or openly, as a politically autonomous group, or support for a related group (involvement into local elections, formation of a political party, group, or movement)
5. Outreach:
 - What do you consider most important for a committed practice: rallying a community, even if the number is small, or reaching a maximum number of people through a media?
 - What do you think of the cultural object (CD, DVD...): to what extent is it a relevant medium for a committed practice?

6. Artistic intentions and political self-perception:

- Is there something inherent in your artistic form that convenes the political? Or does it depend on practice?
- Would you consider yourself:
 - (i) Political?
 - (ii) Anti-political?
 - (iii) Apolitical (not concerned about political activism)?
 - (iv) Apolitical or anti-political in the sense that you would rather get involved in a social movement or an informal local network?
 - (v) None of the above? (specify alternative term)
- In the end, how would you understand the term political? Is it to do with anything that defines and delimits social and economic relations in society, or has it become more personified, whereby *le politique* (the political) today is a synonym of *les politiques* (i.e. institutional policies)?

1.2 Role of artistic practices in relation to political activism

7. What role do you think art (or cultural practices) can play to form a resistance to neoliberalism or an unjust order?

8. Do you consider that your collective/band/group has a social role to play?
What is it? Is it relative or absolute?

9. Do you consider that your collective/band/group has a political role to play?
What is it? Is it relative or absolute?

10. Is art sufficient in creating social networks and communities, and if not, what is your opinion on political activism?

- If you consider that the political role of your group is relative, what other forms of resistance or struggle do you see to defend what you are committed to defend?

11. Is it a good thing for a resistance to create a monopoly, for the sake of clarity and efficiency?

- Are you in favour of a unitary form of political struggle or of a more fragmented, pluralistic social activism?
- Does pluralist, locally anchored action not imply much less visibility hence efficiency?

2. Relation to the past

2.1 History, memory and legacy of political activism

12. The 1970s:

- What do you think and/or what were you thinking at the time of the left, the movements of *travailleurs immigrés* that developed in the 1970s?

13. The 1980s:

- Do you consider the 1980s a turning point for militant activism?
- Was it the demise of political movements of resistance to capitalism?
- Did people turn away from politics to embrace culture instead, and if yes, why? If no, to what extent and where was the political struggle taking place?

2.2 Cultural traditions and influences

14. As Mitterand's left acceded power, he institutionalised some of the counterculture in order to create new symbols or cultural emblems for the Republic and/or the left in power.

- According to you, was this a mistake?
- Did that lead to a de-politicisation of the resistance to institutions?

15. What do you think and/or what were you thinking at the time of the practice of crossbreeding (*métissage*) which (re-)emerges in the 1980s counterculture (particularly in popular music)?

16. In what cultural and/or social tradition would you inscribe your artistic practice? Why?

3. Relation to the present

3.1 The republic, political movements, social identities

17. Reaction to political mobilisations and social developments:

- How did you react to the CPE movement (February to April 2006)? Did you support or take part to it and why?
- How did you react to the November riots in the French suburbs and disadvantaged areas (Nov 2005)? Did you support it or take part to it and why?
- Is there a political radicalisation taking place in France since 21st April 2002?

18. Affiliations to militant networks:

- What is your relation to, and what do you think of current institutional government opposition parties, mainly UDF and PS?
- What is your relation to, and what do you think of current trade unions, such as CGT, CFDT, FO, SUD?
- What is your relation to, and what do you think of current traditional alternative left parties, such as *les Verts*, or on the extreme left, the PC, LCR, or LO?
- What is your relation to, and what do you think of current other alternatives trends with a global dimension, such as NGOs, *altermondialiste* social movements or forums: the *Confédération Paysanne*, *Attac*, *DAL*, *No Vox*, *No border*, *Greenpeace*, *Amnesty International*, *MDM*, the *WSF*, *ESF* (...)?

19. The postcolonial debate:

- Is the Republic a colonial (or *postcolonial*) Republic?
- What is your relation to, and what do you think of current autonomous political movements such as the *Ingènes de la République*, the *MIB*, *DiverCité*, or *Motivé-e-s* and the platform *Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires*?

3.2 Cultural circulation and the media

20. What do you think of current mainstream media: in relation to politics? To cultural institutions? To your type of artistic practice or style?

- To what extent do they lie, modify or shape social representations and identities? What are the consequences? Do they contribute to a de-radicalisation of cultural or social movements?

- Is visibility in mainstream media an important or relevant strategy for you? Does this involve compromises, and to what extent are compromises useful?

21. How about alternative media:

- Have you resort to them ? If so, which ones? What do you think of them?
- Have you created your own media?

3.3 Administration, cultural institutions, and cultural industries

22. Level of financial professionalization of musical practice:

- Do you earn enough to live off your music, or do you (some of you) have a(nother) job?

23. Financing of musical production:

- How is your musical production organised?
- Is your music self-produced, or produced by a *major*, or an independent record label?
- How is your music distributed? Do you resort to your own resources, or to those provided by a *major*, or an independent record label?

24. Associative funding:

- Are you constituted as an autonomous association? If not, are you dependent on one or more than one? Do you receive council subsidies through this?
- Do you receive funding from charities, private companies, or to what extent would you be ready to accept them if it could help you set up a social alternative project, such as a performance workshop or a local association?

25. Financial autonomy:

- Do you think that in a cultural practice of resistance to neoliberalism, economic autonomy is a necessary condition for the practice not to be co-opted by the dominant economic classes?
- If yes, have you tried self-management experiences, or do you think some subsidies are more acceptable than others, given certain conditions?

3.4 Subversive aesthetics: *détournement* vs. denunciation ?

26. Are the cultural practitioners anchored in the *quartiers* (disadvantaged suburbs) here to set fire to the *quartiers* or to put it out (*pompiers ou pyromanes des quartiers*)?

27. Do you consider or want your practice to be a form of avant-garde?

28. Do you think art necessarily implies subversion?

- What role does subversion play in relation to politics?
- Is it a form of *conscientisation* (raising awareness)?
- Is subversion bound to be assimilated in the discourse of cultural institutions?

29. What role does festive gathering play for you?

- To what extent does this shape your practice of live performance?
- Do you think your practice of live performance necessarily involves a political dimension?

4. Relation to the future

4.1 The republic, political movements, social identities

30. How do you see the current political radicalisation happening in France develop in the near future? (*the following were only relevant/ applicable to a limited number of interviews*)

- Do you think Sarkozy will/could win the presidential elections?
- Do you think people will vote massively?
- Do you intend to vote (do you think it is useful)?

31. How do you see the current situation in the *quartiers* develop?

- Do you think policies will be more stringent or repressive?
- Do you think the *banlieues* will burn again soon, or do you think some political, grassroots movements will emerge from there?

4.2 La lutte continue

32. What are you projecting to do in a near future?

Appendix 6. Extracts of recorded interviews (in French)

1. Michel Roger, from Jolie Môme

I interviewed Michel Roger, Pascale Zanelli et Loïc Canitrot of Jolie Môme still at the climax (although towards the end) of the CPE movement, on 6th & 8th April 2006.

Here are some excerpts of the interview with Michel Roger.

As the context of social mobilisation made it difficult to proceed to a well-organised, solidly coherent interview, it should be admitted that if the familiar and oral tone was left deliberately intact, the discussion has been freely edited to be re-ordered thematically.

➤ 1. Origines:

On pourrait peut-être commencer par parler de comment ça a commencé...

Alors, au départ on est une troupe normale, c'est-à-dire, moi j'étais comédien à la Cartoucherie, j'ai fait de la mise en scène, pour voir si j'étais capable d'en faire voilà. Puis, comme il m'a semblé que j'étais capable il m'a semblé important de trouver un lieu, alors on a trouvé un lieu... on a cherché un lieu d'abord. Fallait envisager quelle était ma stratégie, quelle était l'objectif de mon travail, et j'avais constaté quand j'étais à la Cartoucherie (je suis resté dix ans permanent là-bas), [...que] mes camarades de mon quartier ne venaient pas au théâtre. [...] Donc je me suis dit « Tiens, où sont mes camarades d'enfance ? »... [...Eux], ils étaient plutôt dans la délinquance, ou des choses comme ça, donc on a essayé de contacter des endroits où il y avait des gens qui s'occupaient de la délinquance et des centres d'hébergement de réinsertion sociale, des prisons, la protection judiciaire de la jeunesse et des choses comme ça. Et enfin de compte c'est une équipe d'un centre d'hébergement de réinsertion sociale Emmaüs qui nous a répondu. On est restés cinq ans à travailler avec des gens et difficultés sociales dans Paris. C'était notre lieu. On travaillait là et en échange [on nous laissait le lieu]

C'était où ?

Châtelet, centre de Paris. Rue des Bourdonnais.

Et là il y a des rencontres qui [influé sur l'évolution de la compagnie]... ?

Ben on a appris plein de choses là, on a appris plein plein de choses. C'était le début des années 80, c'était en 83-84, c'était la nouvelle propreté, le tournant voilà, la gauche qui devient libérale, qui explique aux gens que s'ils sont dans un centre d'hébergement, entre mecs, en dortoirs, c'est parce que... Parce que normalement il devait y avoir un centre qui était fait avant pour les sortants de prison, les toxicomanes... [un centre de réintégration]. Et là il y avait plein de travailleurs parce qu'il n'y avait plus de place dans les foyers de jeunes travailleurs - c'était la grande montée du chômage et on leur disait que c'était de leur faute s'ils étaient là, c'est parce qu'ils savaient pas se vendre.

Donc on a appris des choses au niveau politique. On avait pas beaucoup d'illusions sur la gauche non-communiste. Et là, on a été vraiment confortés dans nos désillusions, si on veut. Et donc ça nous a effectivement... éveillé politiquement, plus qu'éveillé politiquement que nous l'étions, même si on était pas complètement naïfs. Et c'est le début de notre histoire.

[...]

➤ 2. Fonctionnement:

Est-ce que [Jolie Môme] a changé depuis, je veux dire pas seulement le contexte, mais aussi la démarche ?

Ben, ça a évolué, ça évolue dans une démarche de plus en plus élaborée politiquement, réfléchie... [...qui] se traduit par une auto-gestion de plus en plus réelle et un partage de responsabilité réel.

Donc il y a pas de séparation des fonctions ?

Si il y séparation des fonctions mais c'est-à-dire que c'est vraiment des fonctions assumées [...]: la personne qui s'occupe du site Internet, elle s'occupe du site Internet totalement. Bon en liaison avec nous bien entendu, mais c'est son histoire. Et en même temps c'est le guitariste. Et en même temps il est comédien.

D'accord. Vous avez le statut d'intermittent ?

Oui on est tous intermittents, à salaire égal.

D'accord. Mais après vous faites aussi de la gestion... ?

Ben la gestionnaire, c'est Pascale. Au début avec moi, enfin un an après moi, voilà, mais en même temps elle est comédienne et chanteuse.
.../...

Oui et enfin je sais que ça couac avec d'autres gens, mais si ya moyen d'avoir accès éventuellement à vos dossiers de financement, juste pour avoir un ordre d'idée...

Oui oui vois ça avec Pascale. Nous on a rien à cacher.
.../...

➤ 3. Implantation locale, institutions, et réseaux de visibilité:

Et vous êtes toujours ancrés sur Paris ou la région parisienne ?

Oh ben on tourne beaucoup. Mais on a ce lieu qu'on nous a confié il y a un an et demie maintenant, par la ville de Saint-Denis.

Et donc vous utilisez ce lieu où vous êtes pour rayonner localement ?

Ben avant on avait un lieu à nous si tu veux, on payait un loyer pas cher, ça faisait 50m2, on y était très bien on avait un lieu mais on pouvait pas y jouer, on jouait à la Cartoucherie. Et puis depuis qu'on a ce lieu là, on y joue puisque on peut y jouer.

C'est un lieu à la fois entre atelier, scène...

Voilà, atelier, scène, accueil, on fait des accueils d'ateliers ou...

Des accueils de personnes... ?

Ca peut être un film de Pierre Carles, « Ni vieux ni traître », comme ça peut être un spectacle d'une compagnie sur la prévention suicide...
.../...

Et donc vous, vous passez essentiellement par, les institutions on va dire, pour essayer de vous implanter localement, ou... ?

Non non, on passe jamais par l'institution. C'est vrai que là, le service culturel de Saint-Denis nous a accueilli, nous a sauvé la vie parce qu'on était expulsés de Paris, donc du lieu dans lequel on était avant parce qu'on était dans un lieu peinarde et Delanoë il a décidé de vouloir faire son village olympique à l'endroit où on était, donc on a été expulsés. Donc on a été sauvés par le service culturel de Saint-Denis, la directrice du service culturel nous connaissait, et puis qu'elle cherchait une troupe réelle pour tenir ce lieu... une troupe, pas des gens qui se baladent tous les jours...

Mais vous faites des réseaux je suppose avec d'autres associations, d'autres compagnies... Et ça, ça se fait comment ?

[...] les réseaux sont faits depuis très longtemps, ça fait depuis 83, et ça fait 23 ans qu'on est ici.

Dans le militantisme, par un mélange d'interrelationnel et de...

Voilà. Voilà. On a 10.000, enfin pas 10.000, mais presque 10.000 noms sur notre fichier.

D'accord. Mais donc ya des collaborations possibles, vous ce que vous essayez c'est d'étendre...

Ben ça s'étend, ça s'étend de soi-même. On a vécu beaucoup de choses avec beaucoup de gens. Mais c'est plus dans le réseau... tu vois, ça va du plan B à CQFD, au Droit Au Logement...
[...]

D'accord. Et vous pensez que ça peut créer quelque chose de plus... De moins invisible ?

Ben je pense que ça se crée parce que je crois que le travail qu'on fait depuis des années, les autres et nous, porte ses fruits aujourd'hui.

Oui on le voit dans la rue.

Voilà, je crois que tout est interdépendant à ce niveau-là.

Et après [...] si par exemple vous voulez faire quelque chose avec les jeunes du quartier, d'ici, vous vous y prenez comment ?

Nous on peut pas faire quelque chose avec les jeunes du quartier, les jeunes au quartier ils font quelque chose et s'ils veulent jouer ici ils jouent.

[...Mais] les jeunes du quartier c'est vraiment un autre monde par rapport à nous... [...] n'a un dialogue avec les grands - avec les grands qui organisent leurs associations, ya une association de hip hop dans le coin, on s'entend très bien avec ceux qui animent l'association... [...] Par contre, ils mettent pas les pieds au théâtre. [...] Ils sont invités. Ils sont invités, ils savent qu'ils sont invités.

Et vous ça vous intéresse pas de faire dialoguer les différentes formes d'expression... ?

Oui ça nous intéresse, mais faut-il qu'ils oublient qu'on est des adultes et qu'ils sont des ados, et ça c'est pas encore...

Et comment on fait pour faire passer, enfin pour essayer de casser les barrières... ?

Ben si on avait la solution... Là pour le moment ben tout se passe bien, c'est déjà énorme. Entre eux et nous, on est même traités de collabos par les habitants du quartier en face, ceux qui ont des ennuis avec eux.

Mais ouais vous arrivez à créer des... quand même...

Ben ils savent qui on est si tu veux, les grand-pères leur ont expliqué... bon ils savent déjà qu'on a un chapiteau, ça a été une des choses qui les a fait nous respecter je pense, quand on est arrivés. Et ils ont vu qu'on a rendu hommage à Action Directe, ils connaissent pas bien mais ils savent qu'on est copains avec des bandits.

Ouais c'est ça. Ya une autre perception.

Voilà c'est un truc comme ça, un peu... alors qu'avant, les gens qui étaient là avant, ils avaient eu bien des emmerdes.

[...]

➤ 4. Des productions artistiques orientées pour un public spécifique ?

Et là, le spectacle de ce soir, c'est quoi ?

Le spectacle de ce soir, c'est notre dernière création, elle date de 2002. Et ça a trait, donc à Spartacus, donc à la base, mais le World Trade Centre est arrivé pendant qu'on était en train de réfléchir sur Spartacus, donc on a fait le lien entre les impérialismes à l'époque de Rome et l'impérialisme d'aujourd'hui.

[...]

Et vous appliquez une sorte de grille de lecture un peu... on va dire marxiste, pour faire vite, à ce genre de chose ?

Tout à fait, tout à fait.

[...]

Et le divertissement ça a un rôle important c'est un moteur là-dedans ?

Ouais, si tu sais bien à qui tu t'adresses. Pour nous c'est un moteur parce qu'on sait à qui on s'adresse, on sait pour qui on joue.

[...] Et vous jouez pour tout type de publics ou... ?

On joue pour tout type de public mais en sachant que ceux qui comptent c'est nos amis. Nos amis, c'est la gauche antilibérale si tu veux, ça représente plus de 10% de la population. Sur 60 millions d'habitants, ça fait du monde, hein.

Sûrement plus même. Ce qu'on voit dans les élections...

Voilà, voilà. Donc ça fait du monde. On a pas encore touché tous les gens concernés. Et en plus on va au-delà, parce qu'évidemment ya des gens qui viennent par hasard emmenés par des amis, au lycée, au collège...

➤ 5. Théâtre militant et luttes sociales:

Et ça, ça vous pose pas de problème de toucher un petit peu à tout comme ça, au niveau de la cohérence ?

Ben ya une politique quand même. [Les grandes lignes derrière], c'est le théâtre utile. Le théâtre utile socialement.

E[n tant que] lutte contre l'exclusion sociale en fait ?

Oui si tu veux, tu peux le dire comme ça.

Je sais pas... On peut voir ça comme une lutte, on peut voir ça autrement aussi.

Oui oui. C'est-à-dire que le théâtre pour nous c'est pas la vraie lutte, c'est l'endroit où l'on vient se réchauffer entre deux luttes.

Et la vraie lutte, elle est en dehors alors, c'est séparé ?

Ben la lutte même, pour nous, c'est la lutte des intermittents.

Bien sûr mais est-ce que tout ça, ça se combine pas un petit peu... ?

Ben si puisque nous on nous a vu aller chanter pour le droit au logement, pour les sans-papiers, pour les salariés traminots à Clermont-Ferrand, pour les lycéens tout à l'heure et demain, pour les étudiants toute la semaine dernière, la semaine dernière on a fait six facs. Donc on tourne.

Mais chanter pour une lutte c'est pas la même chose que de lutter soi-même, attention.

Justement, il est où le point de séparation, c'est parce que c'est en représentation ?

Parce que c'est en représentation, et puis, si tu veux, c'est un métier quand même. C'est une discipline, de jouer sur scène, de chanter ou de jouer, c'est un métier. On s'est bien rendu compte que quand on est en grève et quand on est en lutte, quand on va occuper des lieux, quand on va manifester sur des manifestations, ou quand on écrit des tracts, c'est pas le même boulot.

Oui d'accord, mais est-ce qu'il y pas une forme de convergence... ?

Ah si, on fait en sorte qu'il y ait une convergence.

.../...

Oui c'est vrai, et justement, ça m'intéresse, ce lien, parce que [par exemple] le hip hop ok d'accord c'est une forme de combat mais ça reste de la musique et c'est cette espèce de séparation là qui m'intéresse entre la lutte et...

Je suis d'accord aussi. On est utiles pour le repos du guerrier. [...] Mais pas pour la guerre.

Oui, mais en même temps le repos c'est le moment où on réfléchit, et puis ya la réflexion et l'action et...

Oui oui oui. Les gens viennent se ressourcer. Alors en ce moment⁶⁴⁶, on a moins de public que d'habitude, parce qu'ils ont pas besoin de se ressourcer, ils sont actifs. [...] On en a fait des luttes virulentes avec les intermittents,

⁶⁴⁶ i.e., during the CPE movement (reminder).

des actions virulentes, mais depuis 2003, on a vécu d'autres choses. Et d'avoir à prendre en charge une assemblée générale, à prendre en charge un festival comme Aurillac au niveau co-ordination, on s'est rendus compte que c'est quand même... là c'est plus de la chanson c'est plus du théâtre.

C'est-à-dire ?

Bah, c'est la vie quoi. Et tout révolutionnaire que tu puisses être sur le plateau, quand tu te retrouves comme un con à être celui qui va négocier, tu te retrouves comme un con à négocier...

Ben ouais, c'est ça, on est pris dans ses contradictions... [...] Parce que si tu te refermes trop, tu fais rien. Il faut penser praxis, utile, stratégie...

Voilà. C'est pour ça que par exemple dans l'extrême-gauche, tout nous intéresse tu vois, les positions qui peuvent paraître parfois sectaires de Lutte Ouvrière sont fondamentales pour les autres. [...] Parce qu'ils font les gardiens du temple, et les gardiens du temple, c'est utile - ça a son utilité aussi.

.../...

[...] En fait [...] la question qui m'intéresse, c'est le rapport entre la pratique culturelle et la politique - et la pratique politique - et voir justement où est la frontière, si ya vraiment une frontière ou si c'est seulement méthodologique, car on peut considérer que tout est culturel et que tout est politique comme ça a été dit à une époque...

Ben ya une frontière... Tout est culturel, tout est politique, mais après ya un problème de comment tu fonctionnes, ben d'où viennent tes fonds, tu vois. Nous on vit sans subventions, à part le lieu magnifique ici qui est payé, ce qui est une subvention énorme. [...] Mais à part ça nous nos salaires, c'est quand on joue. Et on a pas de subventions.

➤ 6. La lutte des intermittents:

Enfin ya juste le statut d'intermittent mais qui est menacé...

Voilà, donc on se bat pour le défendre, parce qu'on en vit... Nous on pense que la subvention la plus démocratique c'est celle de la solidarité professionnelle. C'est le régime du chômage interprofessionnel, c'est la plus démocratique des subventions puisque les autres sont délivrées arbitrairement, parce que t'as des types qui prétendent être des experts ou je ne sais quoi et qui viennent juger ton travail. Pour nous ça nous paraît... pour moi personnellement, ça me paraît complètement... Je trouve ça assez fou qu'un travailleur puisse juger les autres travailleurs pour savoir s'ils ont le droit d'avoir de l'argent. Parce que ce qui se passe au niveau du Ministère de la Culture, t'as ces experts qui vont juger les autres pour savoir s'ils sont bons pour avoir des subventions, imagine ça en usine: l'ouvrier qui irait voir ses autres camarades et qui irait dire au patron « lui il mérite d'être payé et lui il mérite pas d'être payé », je crois que le mec il se ferait... enfin ça serait impossible. Et bien nous dans la culture on trouve ça tout à fait normal. Enfin, ils trouvent ça tout à fait normal. [...] Ça a une origine si tu veux, dans ce métier là je crois que, même à l'époque de Molière, même Molière lui-même, je crois que c'est quand même un métier de courtisan à la base. Et que en général on est payés par les puissants, on est entretenus par les puissants. Alors évidemment ya une tradition qui vient de Brecht et qui vient de Prévert en France, qui a dit « nous on est pas des artistes, on est des travailleurs du spectacle », en gros. Et nous, on pense qu'on est des travailleurs du spectacle. On aime pas trop le mot artiste, parce que artiste, c'est pas à toi-même de le décider...

Et puis dire qu'artiste c'est un métier c'est déjà un peu problématique aussi...

Exactement. On est des travailleurs du spectacle. Voilà. Absolument.

Et donc c'est là où je crois qu'on peut définir les choses, ça fait partie... par rapport oui à l'économie, et les conditions d'existence. Et voilà, c'est en ça que notre troupe est un peu unique: une troupe qui vit avec un noyau de onze personnes, sans subventions, et depuis des années et des années et des années des années des années qui tient le coup, c'est assez rare. C'est assez

unique. Et sans jamais baisser la culotte et sans jamais baisser le discours - baisser la garde quoi, si tu veux...
[...]

➤ 7. Le théâtre, espace de rencontre d'affinités militantes ?

Et vos rapports avec les mouvements politiques, les syndicats, les organisations... ?

Ben ils sont multiples. Ils sont multiples...

Vous pensez que ça a eu une grande utilité de garder des liens avec eux ?

C'est important. Nous on considère qu'on sert de lien, justement. C'est-à-dire qu'on sert de lien...

Et le théâtre est [un moyen] privilégié pour ça ?

Pour nous, c'est un des endroits effectivement où les gens peuvent se rencontrer autour des mêmes valeurs en ayant des sensibilités différentes. Là ici on a accueilli aussi bien Marie-Georges Buffet, qu'Alain Krivine, qu'Arlette Laguillier, que... Gérard Filoche, et puis tout... les dirigeants de la CNT, les anarchistes, on a toute la gauche antilibérale si tu veux, pour employer une expression à la mode.

Donc en fait c'est une sorte de regroupement par en dessous ?

Oui, oui oui, c'est si on peut dire un regroupement par en dessous.

Par en bas si on préfère...

Par en bas voilà. .../...

On a des comédiens qui sont organisés [politiquement]. C'est assez rare aussi. Chose très très rare.

.../...

Oui, mais bon, vous tractez pas - je veux dire, vous avez pas des gens qui passent à tracter pendant que vous faites le spectacle ?

Ca arrive, ça arrive.

Non, mais de la troupe je veux dire.

De la troupe, ça dépend. Ça dépend sur quoi, à quel niveau... ça dépend. [...] On est pas des militants. On est des professionnels du spectacle au service du mouvement ouvrier si tu veux, ou du mouvement salarié, enfin si on peut employer le mot ouvrier. .../...

Alors sinon, ya un film qui passe, tu verras des images, ya des images qui passent avec des bouts d'actions, des petits bouts d'actions, avec les travailleurs du nettoyage, on était intervenus avec eux dans un hôtel. Ya des blocages d'autoroutes.

.../...

Oui donc, c'est avec les ouvriers du nettoyage, et t'as vu comme a Jussieu on chante devant, et à un moment donné on rentre en force dedans. C'est assez marrant parce qu'on a fait le [même] coup [...]. Parce qu'ils ont essayé de nous empêcher d'entrer, les vigiles, donc c'est des torpilles de cheminots, qui tombaient sur la moquette.

Donc là on sait plus qu'est-ce qui est spectacle et ce qui est...

Ouais, voilà.

.../...

[...] Tu connais, quelqu'un qui s'appelle Boltanski, Luc Boltanski ? [Avec] Eve Chiapello ils ont fait une étude de l'idéologie [de ce qu'] ils appellent le nouvel esprit du capitalisme [et sa critique ... En fait] si en 68 ya eu une rencontre, depuis ils divisent la critique en deux, d'un côté ya la critique [...] 'sociale' ouvrière etc, sur les inégalités, les droits des travailleurs etc ; et de l'autre [...] la critique 'artiste', intellectuels, étudiants, artistes aussi, et qui est plus une critique de l'inauthenticité, enfin [...] plus quelque chose d'abstrait. Qu'est-ce que t'en penses de cette séparation ?

Moi j'ai pas l'impression que nos critiques soient très abstraites. Alors, tu connais le Plan B ? [...] Nous on se situe un peu comme le Plan B. Je [qualifierais pas ça] d'abstrait. Voilà. Tu vois, le numéro du Plan B il est très bien...[...]On le vend le Plan B. Aussi. [...]En ce moment c'est d'eux qu'on se rapproche le plus. Et on est en très bons termes avec LO, avec LCR, avec le PC aussi d'ailleurs, Marie-Georges était là dimanche on en revenait pas.

Ouais, parce qu'ils vous voient pas en tant que mouvement politique donc ils se sentent pas en compétition... ?

Non, mais je pense que c'est pas important qu'on soit politique c'est important qu'on soit des artistes. C'est ça qui est plus important... [...] Parce que qu'est-ce qui fait plaisir au public c'est d'avoir des professionnels du spectacle qui sont dans leur camp. Si on est des militants ça sert à rien pour eux, on sert à rien du tout. On sert à rien du tout. Et donc il faut qu'on défende notre qualité artistique et notre travail. Et qu'on soit bons sur scène quoi, que nos spectacles soient bien travaillés. C'est pour ça que je le monte.

2. Hamé from La Rumeur

Mohamed Bourokba, a.k.a. Hamé, is one of the most openly militant members of La Rumeur. While the long trial he had to go through is now over, with Hamé being eventually discharged for good, at the time I interviewed him, the rapper was in the middle of a harassing judicial battle against the French state. In 2002, the Ministry of the Interior, led by Nicolas Sarkozy, took a judicial action for libelling, for a statement written by Hamé in an article published in the band's fanzine sold with the album *L'ombre sur la Mesure*, containing notably the following: «*les rapports du Ministère de l'Intérieur ne feront jamais état des centaines de nos frères abattus par les forces de police sans qu'aucun des assassins n'ait été inquiété*». Summoned to the *Tribunal de Grande Instance* for "libelling statements against the national police", the verdict, returned on 17th December 2004, discharged Hamé, in the name of "freedom of expression". Yet in April 2005, the Republic's public prosecutor appealed against this judgement. Through the media, the matter becomes politicised and radicalised, benefiting from the support of intellectuals, human rights organisations, NGOs (Amnesty International), political movements and collectives (amongst others MIB, the collectives *A toutes les victimes des révolutes de novembre 2005*, or *Résistons ensemble contre les violence's policières et sécuritaires*)⁶⁴⁷. Hamé was trialed again on 11th May 2006. The verdict, discharging Hamé once again, was returned on 22nd June 2006.

I interviewed Hamé on 18th June 2006, four days before that verdict. Here are some excerpts of the interview:

- 1. *Dirais-tu qu'il y a quelque chose d'inhérent dans la forme du rap et de la culture hip-hop qui convoque le politique ?*

Non. Bon, symboliquement, il y a quelque chose d'essentiel au regard du contexte social, historique dans lequel est né le rap. A un moment donné, une certaine frange de la jeunesse Nord-Américaine bien précise, les jeunes noires, portoricaines, non-blanches, des quartiers pauvres, très pauvres des ghettos américains, qui se réapproprie un exercice de la parole, sans que ça soit théorisé, ou porté par un manifeste: c'est un élan de vie, quelque chose qui émerge, qui est le fruit en partie de l'immigration d'une certaine tradition jamaïcaine du [...] *spoken word*. [...] Bon là je te parle du rap, dans sa forme actuelle, mais bien sûr on peut remonter à plein de choses, au griot, aux chants dans les champs de coton, aux *work songs*, aux chants d'esclaves dans les bateaux... et [ça n'est pas inutile]: je pense qu'il faut l'inscrire dans cette tradition-là.

Donc s'il y a quelque chose d'inhérent, de politique au rap, je le vois davantage dans ce symbole-là: c'est des individus qu'on ne souhaite pas entendre qui se font entendre. Donc là évidemment, il y a une charge politique essentielle. Mais une fois qu'on a posé ça, il y a mille manières [...] de parler de sa condition, d'en être conscient ou pas, [...] de regarder son environnement. Il en va de même pour tous les arts: quel regard [on jette] sur l'homme, sur le monde, sur l'environnement, sur les rapports humains...

Mais justement, est-ce que c'est [le rap] à ce moment-là un vecteur, un outil pour créer une communauté de la parole ?

Oui [...] bien sûr. Il y a autour de la pratique artistique, autour des œuvres un attachement très fort, une manière de ritualiser des moments de la vie ; en plus à une époque où tous les rituels, [...] où le rapport au symbolique [ont] disparu, où [...] on ne commémore plus rien du quotidien et de la vie réelle concrète.

Donc, ça sert aussi à convoquer la mémoire ?

Ouais [...] c'est redonner des noms à des lieux, à des visages, à des histoires. C'est une espèce de mémorisation, d'immortalisation. Après, il en va de même de toute pratique artistique. Il y a une dimension individuelle, comme dans

⁶⁴⁷ For a more detailed account, see:

<http://www.acontresens.com/musique/interviews/25.html>, or http://lmsi.net/article.php3?id_article=308

tout art, car ça procède d'un travail individuel, mais il y a une dimension collective très forte aussi: il y a des ressorts d'identification collective très forts. [...] Mais on ne vit pas non plus dans un système neutre. Le rap depuis de nombreuses années a largement été commercialisé, au premier sens du terme.

➤ 2. Tu dirais qu'il y a une récupération de la subversion alors ?...
Comme partout ?

Ouais, ça c'est une des grandes forces du système capitaliste, c'est qu'il sait récupérer ce qui le contredit, ce qui prétend le combattre: le récupérer, le spectaculariser, faire du profit avec.

Justement: ça n'est pas un peu voué à l'échec de vouloir se réapproprier une parole car c'est employer la même stratégie face à laquelle on lutte ?

Mais, la parole, à partir du moment où t'en es privé, soit tu te résignes soit... [Il faut] parler tout simplement. Après, encore une fois, le hip-hop n'est pas un projet idéologique globalisant généralisant, c'est beaucoup plus simple que ça, et en même temps beaucoup plus complexe. C'est une espèce de perpétuation [par] une frange de la population opprimée, qui n'a droit à rien, ne possède rien, subit les conditions d'existence les plus déplorables, qui est niée, ostracisée, ségrégée: tôt ou tard, la vie finit par se frayer un chemin. Le besoin de parler, d'extérioriser, de...

...de placer la violence sur le plan symbolique...

Oui aussi, il y a aussi ce phénomène-là. Quand tu lis des interviews d'Afrika Bambaataa par exemple dans les années 70, il y a clairement cette démarche: investir le champ artistique et symbolique comme réceptacle des frustrations, des violences ; dénouer à travers le canal symbolique [...] physiquement, moralement vers une espèce de performance, d'émulation ; une sorte de dépassement de soi, transposé sur le plan artistique.

Donc pour toutes ces raisons-là, on peut peut-être dire qu'il y du politique. Maintenant, dans les expériences parmi les groupes qui directement, explicitement, investissent le champ politique, dénoncent des choses, et s'autoproclament groupes politiques, c'est encore un autre débat...

Tu veux dire: parce que ça ne peut pas être la seule forme de mobilisation ?

Surtout parce que le politique peut s'exprimer à divers degrés. Par exemple, Public Enemy, un groupe ouvertement politique avec des partis pris assez radicaux et beaucoup de références - à l'histoire des luttes noir-américaines [...] - vilipende ouvertement, de façon très virulente les mythes de l'Amérique Blanche, raciste, héritière de l'esclavage et qui perpétue dans ses pratiques (politiques, judiciaires, symboliques, administratives...) la ségrégation, l'apartheid. Et ça c'est presque un programme politique d'organisation radicale noir-américaine, mis en texte, en musique, transfiguré par une manière de rapper très offensive et des musiques élaborées mais guerrières, [...] avec un travail du sample extrêmement virtuose...

A travers la métaphore des armes, de la lutte, du combat ?

Oui, du conflit, de l'opposition, de l'antagonisme, de la contradiction.

Et puis par ailleurs, tu peux avoir des groupes ou des textes qui sont sur un registre apparemment moins contestataire mais qui le sont tout autant en réalité. [...] Par exemple, je peux te citer Black Sheep, ou à une époque même certains titres du Wu-Tang [...]. On te met sur la table toute la crasse. De Kool G Rap en passant par [...] jusqu'à Mobb Deep, surtout à New York, tu as une école de chroniqueurs urbains qui vont sans faire de morale ou sans condamner, avec un peu de complaisance parfois [...] te faire un tableau du *crack game*: tous les réseaux fumants et fumeux et funestes de l'économie du crack et tout ce que ça peut générer de carnages, de drames, de morts, de crimes. Et en ça, sans dire « je suis politique, c'est le gouvernement qui a fait rentrer le crack à la fin des années 70 pour tuer la contestation et les révoltes politiques dans les ghettos », sans être dans une confrontation frontale de premier degré, le simple fait de mettre ce tableau-là en images et en musique, c'est déjà politique, c'est [un choix du regard], il y a un parti pris au

niveau du regard. Après, [ça se passe] à différents degrés. Je pense qu'il faut savoir regarder le rap pour ce que c'est, c'est-à-dire, une production symbolique ; et savoir le regarder avec la distance nécessaire, comme pour toute œuvre, production symbolique, culturelle [pour percevoir] ce que ça nous nous dit bien sûr sur l'auteur, mais aussi sur l'époque vue à travers l'auteur. [...] Moi, l'art ne m'intéresse qu'à partir du moment où il revendique sa subjectivité.

- 3. Tu as parlé de la culture hip-hop comme un élan de vie, une émergence sans qu'il ait de manifeste ou de théorisation. Mais est-ce que cela ne pose pas problème, voire des contradictions, dès qu'un méta-discours sur le rap d'élabore, dès qu'on essaye de le théoriser ?

Oui absolument, alors évitons de l'institutionnaliser, de lui donner un carcan, [...] un étau. C'est à chacun de théoriser ou de rationaliser, d'essayer de se clarifier à soi sa démarche, son approche, son appréhension des rudiments, des outils de cette pratique artistique. Nous on se gardera bien de faire des manifestes, de faire des espèces de textes fédérateurs...

Mais alors qu'est qui [crée cette fédération, cette communauté ?]

C'est les disques, c'est les œuvres. Après, tout le discours autour des disques et des oeuvres, ça c'est autre chose, et j'ai plutôt tendance à m'en méfier. Ils [les institutions] veulent figer [le rap] dans une espèce de définition indivisible, immuable, universaliste, intemporelle, et on sait que tout ça est voué à l'échec. Je pense qu'il faut laisser le champ super ouvert, laisser la possibilité à toutes les expériences de pouvoir se faire...

Donc tu dirais que théoriser pose problème ou non ? Ca dépend à quel niveau ça se situe ?

Non, mais il faut faire, il faut créer, faire des œuvres, écrire, composer, peindre, tout ce que tu veux, mais il faut faire.

Faut être dans la praxis...

Ca remplace tout discours. Les discours type universitaire sur le rap, c'est gonflant... Il faut faire, il faut partir et en arriver aux œuvres, aux textes, et aux individus qui font cette musique. Après, les baveux frustrés ou aigris ne pas avoir pu ou su faire du rap [...Pourtant] les gens qui en parlent [du rap] peuvent être des relais, des vecteurs, des passeurs d'œuvres, d'expériences, alors ils ont bien sûr leur rôle, leur nécessité, leur importance. [...]

Mais justement est-ce ce n'est pas à cet endroit-là que peut s'opérer une récupération ?

Oh, tu sais, du moment où il y a beaucoup d'argent en jeu, la question ne se pose même plus. C'est [le rap, l'œuvre] inséré dans une industrie du disque, il y a des maisons de disques, des boîtes qui font du profit, des sponsors, tous types de marchands autour... Après c'est l'éternelle question de l'altération de l'intégrité artistique des artistes et des œuvres par la machine commerciale. Toutes les altérations, les pressions, tous les chantages au profit, les appâts du gain... [ne sont] pas détachés de cette musique, qui est pétrie, complètement traversée par les contradictions du système économique dans lequel on vit.

Car il n'y a pas d'autre système en dehors ?

Non bien sûr, rien n'existe pour soi, par soi. Tout est interaction, pénétration de corps hétérogènes, étrangers, tout est pétri par les contradictions du système social, économique, de l'histoire, donc le rap évidemment n'est pas exempt.

- 4. Pour votre [premier] album, vous étiez chez EMI, et après, pour votre dernier album, comment vous avez fait ?

Notre premier album on l'a signé chez une major, EMI, on avait signé un contrat d'artistes. [...] Alors quand tu es en contrat d'artiste dans une maison

de disques, elle est censée tout t'apporter sur un plateau et toi tu es censé te contenter de faire l'artiste, entrer en studio, répondre aux interviews... [..]n se sentait super à l'étroit, étouffés, et on a jamais caché notre conception des choses.

Et donc vous aviez des réticences à ce contrat, mais c'était nécessaire à la survie du projet ?

Ouais [...] on avait aussi envie de bénéficier de la force de vente et de l'infrastructure d'une grosse maison de disques pour donner plus d'impact, de présence, de visibilité...

Mais il y a un prix à payer...

Oui mais on l'a pas payé. Le prix à payer, c'était faire tout et n'importe quoi, faire du *single*, avoir une démarche consumériste au possible. Au préalable, avant la signature du contrat, on s'est mis d'accord avec le patron de la boîte, donc ils nous ont signé en connaissance de cause. On leur avait déjà dit qu'aller tapiner chez Skyrock, c'était hors de question. [...] Nous on a jamais été en deal avec Skyrock, on aurait pu, on a refusé. Des gens pensent que notre posture anti-Skyrock se nourrit d'aigreur, de jalousie, alors que c'est tout l'inverse. Faut savoir que dès le moment où tu signes un contrat avec une major, dans le rap, c'est [le matraquage Skyrock] quasi-systématique, on te le propose, parce que [...] il y a de l'argent derrière. Et [...] on savait que cette radio est un des plus gros formateurs, transformateurs de la musique rap avec toutes ses aspérités en pop et en variété. La puissance de formatage de cette radio était un prix qu'on a toujours refusé de payer, on l'a jamais voulu et on l'a jamais fait. [On a jamais] dealé avec ces gens-là. On a préféré explorer des voies alternatives pour faire connaître notre musique, notamment la scène, un magazine qu'on a entièrement rédigé nous-mêmes, des ateliers d'écriture, et nos disques, le bouche à oreille, la crédibilité, Internet. [...] Donc ça c'était dans le cadre du premier album.

Pour le deuxième album, comme je te disais, la configuration « artiste » [contrat d'artiste] ne nous convenait pas complètement. On était signés en « artiste », mais on travaillait, on agissait, on réfléchissait comme un groupe qui [s'auto-gère]: on était déjà nos propres producteurs, d'une certaine manière, même si le producteur c'était EMI. Par exemple pour le premier album, on leur a fait écouter l'album qu'une fois fini, deux mois avant sa sortie. [...]

Donc, tu dirais qu'il y a une forme d'auto-gestion dans votre démarche ?

Ouais [...], on est très jaloux de ce qu'on fait, on laisse à personne le soin de décider à notre place dans tous les aspects, sur toute la chaîne de réalisation, production... même le nombre de disques en pré-commande pour les stocks, jusqu'à la pochette, la typographie. Ca on l'a imposé, on a même pas laissé à la maison de disques de loisir de trouver quelque chose à redire. Ils ont, je pense, assez vite compris où on voulait en venir et ils se sont rangés quoi.

Parce qu'il valait mieux qu'il soit dans le coup...

Oui, voilà, un truc comme ça. Ils nous ont plutôt fait confiance, ils nous ont plutôt laissé faire ce qu'on voulait.

Et après, le deuxième album, c'est vous qui l'avez sorti ?

Le deuxième album c'est nous qui l'avons produit. Alors là, on a changé de contrat. On a cassé le contrat d'artiste et derrière on a signé un contrat de distribution, avec EMI toujours, qui ramène la maison de disques au seul rôle de distributeur. On fait tout, on produit le disque, on grave la matrice, on finalise le master et on remet le master avec les fils pour la pochette, à la maison de disques qui l'envoie en fabrication et qui l'installe ensuite. Donc on avait 80% du travail, et 70% des royalties. On était dans un 70/30, alors qu'auparavant, on était dans un 10/90 [pour] le contrat d'artiste. On faisait tout, on faisait ce qu'on faisait déjà auparavant, mais là, on l'a fait avec notre argent, un budget qui était à nous, avec notre boîte, notre SARL, notre label, en prenant tous les risques financiers...

Mais ça vous avez pu le faire aussi parce que vous avez eu un bon retour du premier album, vous avez eu les moyens de le faire. Donc il y a une sorte de stratégie, dont vous avez essayé de tirer profit... ?

Ouais, on a trouvé un terrain d'entente, où chacun avait un intérêt dans cette situation-là. [...]

- 5. Pour récapituler et pour recentrer un peu le débat, je me demandais en réalité quel était le rôle politique relatif de ce que vous faites, et tu m'as répondu que ça dépendait en fait de la forme de l'engagement: s'il était autoproclamé ou non, par exemple. Mais dirais-tu qu'il y a une forme de trahison, ou non, de mensonge plutôt, quand on fait de la musique et qu'on s'autoproclame engagé, qu'on en fait une sorte de manifeste politique ?

Non, pas nécessairement même si, pour moi, le politique, ou le sens politique d'une œuvre doit s'imposer aux gens de lui-même, il appartient à l'œuvre, il appartient presque pas à l'auteur de dire « je suis politique ». C'est [...] si l'œuvre tient un discours sur la manière dont le monde tourne, dont la cité est organisée, et que c'est fait de manière sublime et que c'est transfiguré par les codes esthétiques de cette musique, à ce moment oui, on peut dire que c'est une œuvre qui est politique. [...]

Justement, c'est ce moment de conscientisation politique dans le non-dit [dans l'implicite d'une forme esthétique] qui m'intéresse, où sinon, c'est trop explicite et ne passe plus par l'inconscient...

C'est son dispositif [de l'œuvre] [...] scénique et la question de l'image, de la mise en scène qui fait que c'est politique, mais ça passe d'abord par l'image [la métaphore], par l'écriture, par le rapport que t'installés dans les différents symboles, dans l'histoire, dans le sens de l'histoire, de ton récit, ou de tes métaphores. [...] C'est ça que j'aime pas dans le mauvais rap politique, genre à la Assassin...

Ils sont trop donneurs de leçon ?

Le politique c'est pas prendre un bouquin de Chomsky [ou] un chapitre d'un livre de Bourdieu et puis mettre des rimes: [...] « 65% de la population blablabla... », c'est pas ça être politique, tu vois.

Ca, c'est être un intellectuel ?

Non même pas, c'est être pompeux, moraliste, c'est professoral ça, c'est scolaire. Et ça vieillit très mal de toutes façons ce genre de trucs. [...] Créer pour moi, c'est d'abord travailler sur de la matière humaine: [...] sociale, historique, donc humaine. L'histoire [...], les sociétés, l'organisation des sociétés, les rapports humains c'est fait par les hommes: c'est installé, institutionnalisé, créé, fait ou défait, par les hommes, et uniquement par eux. Donc pour moi, être dans le politique et pas partir de l'humain, ça m'intéresse pas. [...]

- 6. En fait, pour toi, à quel niveau se situe la lutte politique ? [Ce] processus de conscientisation qui passe par la puissance de l'œuvre, de façon [peu tangible] et difficile à attraper, ne se suffit en soi (tu es bien d'accord avec moi ?). A ce moment-là, comment tu vois les formes de lutte politique pour les « quartiers », enfin, ce qu'on appelle « les quartiers », mais désignent en réalité des quartiers populaires, voire prolétaires, généralement situés en banlieue ? Qu'est-ce que tu penses par exemple des Indigènes, du MIB... ?

Ce sont des gens pour lesquels j'ai de la sympathie. Objectivement, ils ont beaucoup plus [...] de choses qui les amènent à converger plutôt qu'à diverger, mais après [la différence se situe dans] la manière, l'ancrage sur le terrain, et l'origine sociale aussi des militants. Mais je suis plus particulièrement attaché au MIB parce que ça fait plus de dix ans que je les connais, et c'est quand même les dépositaires, les héritiers directs et légitimes des luttes de l'immigration, même bien avant la Marche pour l'Egalité: depuis le MTA, le mouvement des foyers Sonacotra dans les années 70, des luttes ouvrières

d'immigrés des années 70 et de la fin des années 60. Donc oui, par rapport au diagnostic que posent ces gens de la situation, je m'en sens assez proche, maintenant, je confonds pas les rôles: je suis pas militant associatif [ou] politique, on est un groupe d'artistes qui sont amenés à un moment donné à converger sur un terrain militant par la pratique et qui répercutent aussi certains constats ou certains états des lieux qui peuvent être fait par ailleurs par ces mouvements-là.

Et l'initiative électorale des Motivé-e-s, t'en penses quoi ?

Faut pas que ça se résume à ça quoi: si dans le panier, y a juste écrit un nom sur une liste électorale pour qui voter... A la rigueur, ça devrait venir en dernier point, une fois qu'il y a une réelle organisation politique des quartiers, fait par et pour les quartiers, pour laquelle on puisse voter, [...] se battre, et avec laquelle on puisse porter des exigences, des revendications, des rapports de force.

Donc, l'électoral, la représentation devrait découler de l'organisation...

Voilà, exactement. C'est pas vraiment le cas.

Mais est-ce que ça peut pas être une bonne stratégie justement, une sorte de raccourci pour essayer de convoquer plus de monde plus rapidement ?

Bon ça fait 25 ans qu'on nous dit qu'il faut s'inscrire sur les listes électorales, qu'il y a des listes qui incluent des jeunes garçons et filles de quartier...

Le syndrome Malek Bouhti ?

Oui, on sait au fond à qui ça a profité: c'est des appels d'air, de voix électorales pour les grandes syndicales, les grandes centrales politiques, les grands partis ou les syndicats, qui mettent la question des quartiers au troisième ou quatrième plan et qui instrumentalisent, qui manipulent, qui récupèrent...

Tu parles de qui, des partis d'extrême gauche type LCR, LO, plus que du PS (car au PS je pense qu'ils ont perdu une certaine crédibilité là-dessus) ?

Oui aussi oui. La LCR, chez qui par exemple, y a pas de couleur, il doit pas être question d'ethnie, de couleur, de religion: c'est un refus de regarder la réalité, alors que la race, l'ethnie, les discriminations sur la bases de la religion, c'est là-dessus que s'appuient les classes dominantes pour diviser justement, alors faut agir là-dessus.

Parce que c'est les conséquences du colonialisme, dénoncées par les Indigènes et que ça continue ?

Voilà, exactement. Mais bien avant les Indigènes, le MIB, c'est eux les premiers qui ont parlé de traitement colonial des quartiers. Les Indigènes ça existe [que] depuis un an, deux ans. [...] puis le MIB ils ont un ancrage au pavé, ils ont un ancrage au quartier assez solide. [...]

- *7. Et justement, alors, est-ce que ça pose pas le problème de l'autonomie, comme on le voit au MIB: est-ce que c'est pas un mouvement qui se condamne lui-même à la marginalisation ?*

La question [...] de la conquête de l'autonomie, elle s'est toujours posée pour les organisations politiques qui suivent l'immigration du travail, elle continue à se poser pour les organisations politiques issus des quartiers populaires. Du moment où tu marches pas pour l'un ou l'autre, t'as plus de subvention, tu es marginalisé, tu deviens un paria, tu deviens plus fréquentable, du moment où tu entres politiquement, en opposition, en contradiction...

Avec tous, non ? Et c'est ça qui fait la marginalisation...

Ouais c'est clair. Parce que la contradiction elle en découle. La marginalisation [...], c'est le fruit de la mise au premier plan de questions qui sont secondaires pour les grands partis politiques de gauche: [...] la double peine, [...] les crimes policiers, [...] la ségrégation sur des bases

raciales, ça c'est secondaire pour les grands partis politiques qui représentent, du PC au PS, la petite et moyenne bourgeoisie de gauche en France, la petite et moyenne bourgeoisie Blanche. [...]

L'équivalent des Français d'Algérie ?

Euh ouais, jusqu'à ce que les anciens colonisés eux-mêmes créent leur propre parti politique, y avait une espèce de représentation paternaliste des pseudo intérêts des anciens colonisés. Il a fallu que eux-mêmes créent leur propre organisation, défendent les propres intérêts, [...] leurs propres exigences, leurs propres revendications, mettent en place leur propre lutte, pour que les choses avancent.

Et c'est à ce moment que tu es obligé de passer par la violence, à un moment donné (comme pour les Black Panthers par exemple) ?

Ben à un moment donné lorsque l'expression du pouvoir, par la violence institutionnelle, [...] sociale, [...] économique, [...] policière ne laisse plus d'autre choix pour résister à l'écrasement que d'opposer une contre-violence, [...] ça c'est le sens de l'histoire, tragique cruelle: malheureusement, lorsqu'il n'y a plus aucun recours pour vivre dignement et prétendre à une existence décente individuellement et collectivement, les corps et les âmes prisonniers d'un étouffoir qui a été imposé par d'autres, se saisissent de...

Y a une sorte de ré-appropriation de la parole et y a aussi une ré-appropriation de la violence qui a lieu ? Ou une ré-appropriation du pouvoir... ?

Une ré-appropriation du combat, [...] de la légitimité à se battre, [...] de la lutte, et des modes de lutte. Et c'est plus à tel ou tel parti ou à telle ou telle âme charitable humaniste au mauvais sens du terme, paternaliste de nous dire comment se battre, comment faire de la politique [...] de décider pour nous, c'est nous qui le faisons, et en les emmerdant...

Mais quand tu prends l'exemple des Motivé-e-s, est-ce qu'il y a pas un moment donné, où quand tu arrives à une forme d'organisation, y a forcément une représentation qui se met en place qui empêche, ralentit, ou canalise cette émergence ?

Ouais, mais c'est nécessaire.

Donc, le mouvement de lutte se coupe l'herbe sous le pied ?

Non. Si une association comme les Motivé-e-s ou autre ont une représentation à la municipalité, des sièges, et une fois installée là, prennent cette position comme une fin [...], que ensuite les militants, les mots d'ordre se diluent dans la gestion politique politicienne de sa propre place, de sa propre présence électorale dans le champ de représentation politique, là oui, tu entres dans le jeu de la lutte des places [...]: faire ses affaires, faire grandir le poids de sa représentativité, de sa représentation, son nombre de voix d'électeurs, mais concrètement la condition ou les conditions de vie des gens, tu vas presque les négocier pour pouvoir toi rester en place, [...] réaliser des ambitions de chapelle, et ça c'est une espèce d'institutionnalisation du politique vers le politicien. Mais moi je pense que tout dépend du projet porté. Si déjà une organisation politique a pour premier mot d'ordre la fin des brutalités policières, ça, ça vaut le coup, [...] y a un véritable enjeu car à travers la question des brutalités policières [...] tu peux déboucher sur tout un tas de questions centrales: sur la permanence des rapports coloniaux, la question du pouvoir, la question de la légitimité du monopole de la violence légitime [par] l'Etat [...], alors qu'il a surtout le monopole de la violence illégitime [...E]t quel est cet Etat, qu'est-ce qu'il y a derrière tous ces meurtres de jeunes de quartiers, d'enfants fauchés par des balles policières et [derrière] la couverture judiciaire, la clémence judiciaire qui entoure ce genre d'affaires la plupart du temps, tout ça oui, ça, c'est des questions assez taboues dont personne, à part des gens comme le MIB s'empare. Personne s'en empare.

Par intimidation ? Les gens n'osent pas parce qu'il y a trop de répression ?

Oui évidemment. L'état idéologique de la société aujourd'hui, c'est le point de vue policier. Le point de vue policier il est dominant aujourd'hui. Alors toutes les questions sociales elles sont observées, regardées à travers un regard policier. La question des mineurs, [...] des enfants, [...] des parents, [...] du droit démocratique de pratiquer son culte, du droit de vote... Tout, c'est désespérant. La musique, le rap, le discours dominant sur le rap c'est un discours policier... Y a pas besoin d'avoir un képi pour le tenir. Tout le monde s'y est rangé chez les élites, et chez les journalistes, chez beaucoup d'intellectuels, ou soi-disant intellectuels.

- 8. Mais toi alors tu fais une séparation entre militantisme et rap: est-ce qu'y a une séparation complètement claire entre faire du rap d'un côté et l'activisme politique de l'autre? Où se situent la frontière et les recoupements? Car en fait, on parle souvent des pratiques artistiques comme des « extincteurs des quartiers », et des artistes comme des « pompiers des banlieues », bien qu'on peut les traiter de pyromanes aussi. Dans quelle mesure le rap prend un aspect révolutionnaire, ou subversif, dans le sens où il pointe [là où ça blesse] et donc peut éveiller des révoltes ou des crises?

Ok, [...] y a plusieurs questions dans ta question. Donc la frontière, ou la limite, pour moi c'est deux terrains [le politique et l'artistique engagé] qui se superposent, qui sont dans leur pratique différents certes, mais qui s'articulent d'une certaine manière, [...] ça procède d'un même refus déjà d'un certain nombre de choses: [...] de la condition [...] qui est faite aux quartiers populaires, aux enfants, aux fils, aux parents des quartiers populaires et plus particulièrement issus de l'immigration. Ça procède aussi d'une volonté de mettre des mots sur des maux... [...] De dépeindre [ce refus], de l'écrire, d'agir aussi. Quand t'écris, quand tu cries tu agis aussi, c'est aussi un acte. Donc voilà les points communs.

Après les différences, c'est que tu travailles sur d'autres terrains: c'est d'autres rythmes [...], c'est des contextes, des ressorts intellectuels différents. Quand j'écris un texte de rap, je pense à l'image, je pense au souffle du mot, de la métaphore, quand j'écris un texte militant, je m'interdis de penser à la métaphore, [...] ma personnalité s'efface. [...]

Tu dirais alors que la subjectivité disparaît dans l'activisme collectif?

C'est pas qu'elle disparaît, c'est que c'est deux exercices complètement différents. Dans un tu es dans l'imaginaire, et dans l'autre tu es dans le concret, dans le mot sec, précis. [...] D'un côté, on est sur le terrain symbolique, et de l'autre on est sur le terrain réaliste: une écriture symboliste et une écriture réaliste. Mais c'est les mêmes individus qui font les deux, donc la personnalité, la subjectivité elle s'efface pas non plus.

Mais elle se collectivise un petit peu?

Ouais, on va dire que le « je » disparaît un peu au profit du « nous »

Donc t'aimes pas les rappeurs qui disent « nous » par exemple?

Non, par forcément, ça dépend. Le « nous » n'est pas détestable, le « je » non plus...

Et le « nous » peut être un « je »...

Et inversement. Mais je préfère que le « je » devienne un « nous », qui soit tellement personnel qu'il accède à quelque chose de collectif, à l'universel. Qu'il soit tellement personnel, tellement spécifique qu'il touche à des cordes universelles, à ces cordes collectives, parce que tout le monde a cette corde là. Et quand le « je » la touche bien, la fait bien vibrer, y a tout de suite le « nous » derrière.

- 9. Ok. J'avais aussi une question sur la culture hip-hop. Depuis pas mal de temps, on dit que les jeunes s'intéressent plus autant à la culture hip-hop. Est-ce que pour toi, la survie artistique passe par une sorte de métissage, dans les styles? Ou est-ce qu'au contraire elle passe par une certaine orthodoxie?

Non non, moi je suis contre l'orthodoxie, la sclérose, la pureté. Bon on est des puristes ; ça peut paraître paradoxal, mais y a une différence entre être un puriste, une sorte de puriste du dénuement, et un puriste de la pureté. Nous on pense que le rap doit continuer à être l'art du pauvre.

Donc, vous restez des puristes dans l'esprit mais pas dans la forme ?

[...] Nous la forme qu'on défend, elle est assez minimale, elle se résume à quelques éléments, et à du texte fort évocateur, un imaginaire [...] le plus puissant, le plus singulier possible et un espèce de rapport à la musique qui est de l'ordre de la pulsation cardiaque, quelque chose d'assez sanguin, et puis un texte qui soit la chair [...]... On est pas trop pour le remplissage sonore et musical, on est pour ramener ça à quelques éléments qui ensemble vont créer la base rythmique et harmonique.

Pour que ça reste lisible ?

Ouais [...]: avec suffisamment d'espace pour recevoir le texte, quelque chose d'assez aéré pour se laisser pénétrer et pétrir par le texte. [...] « Less is more » comme dirait Miles Davis.

Et donc, est-ce que tu penses que le rap va se renouveler, que quelque chose va ré-émerger par en dessous qui va dépoussiérer, ou s'intégrer à la forme actuelle dans une forme de métissage, ou bien alors, qu'il risque [...], de se faire complètement décaniller ?

Oui je pense [...] qu'il y a un courant qui va s'amorcer là, très bientôt. Bon faut avoir l'œil sur ce qui va se passer Etats-Unis, car c'est toujours eux qui mènent un peu la danse, qui font et défont les tendances, les écoles, les styles ou les préoccupations. Mais oui je crois beaucoup aux cycles [...]: y a eu trois grand cycles là, depuis les années 80, et tous ont à peu près correspondu à des climats, à des ères politiques. L'ère Reagan, c'est l'ère qui a donné Grand Masterflash et Public Enemy. L'ère Clinton, c'est [...] Snoop Dog, Dre, bon y a eu aussi le Wu Tang, enfin ça c'était plutôt Bush père. Et l'ère Bush là, c'est G-Unit, [...] Lyl John, [...] c'est la saturation du rap pour le fric, du rap [...] suresthétisé, [...] promoteur de l'industrie de la joaillerie et de l'automobile. Mais chaque ère produit les germes de sa contradiction [...]. Et puis bon faut aussi voir que c'est un pays qui est en guerre, et le prix de la guerre est incommensurable, il est énorme pour les ghettos, et que forcément [...], va y avoir un contrecoup, [...] quelque chose. [...] Encore une fois l'étouffoir [...], l'étau se resserre, la déliquescence sociale [augmente], et évidemment, fatalement y a des choses, des grands bols d'oxygène, ou l'expression de la nécessité d'une émancipation qui va se traduire très bientôt, j'en suis sûr. Ça va peut-être prendre la figure d'un artiste, d'un groupe, ou d'une tendance, mais le rap, le *gangstarap* (enfin c'est même pas du *gangstarap* G-Unit et tout), c'est du rap de *pimp*, du rap de proxo, de multi-millionnaire. Et ça c'est pas éternel, parce que c'est pas ce que le ghetto vit. Et à un moment donné, le divorce, l'imposture [...] elle va tomber d'elle-même [...]. Dès que quelque chose d'antagonique, de puissant créativement, auquel le ghetto va s'identifier, dès que ça, ça va arriver, dès qu'il y aura l'avènement de quelque chose comme ça, tout le reste va prendre 15 ans de vieux.

➤ *10. Et tu penses que les éléments déclencheurs, c'est souvent des changements économiques, ou des changements politiques ? [...]*

C'est la vie des gens, c'est leurs conditions d'existence: l'existence fait la conscience, comme on dit, c'est ça. Et quand [...] tu demandais si le rap était de nature à être pompier ou pyromane, ça c'est vain, moi je regarde pas les choses sous cet angle là: les jeunes ne se révoltent pas à partir d'un texte, d'une chanson, d'une musique, ils se révoltent à partir d'une condition sociale, d'une injustice, d'un meurtre policier. C'est [...] la vie sociale qui détermine les révoltes, les extinctions, c'est pas l'art. C'est pas l'art qui fait les révolutions, [...] qui fait les révoltes, il les accompagne, il peut les exprimer, [...] les retranscrire, les transfigurer, les ramener à des symboles, mais c'est pas l'art qui fait l'histoire.

Dans mon travail de terrain avec Voukoum MKG (Mouvmman Kiltirel Gwadeloup), un mouvement culturel basé à Basse-Terre, les membres font plein de choses, des ateliers, des repas, de la musique, ils réorganisent une vie en communauté, et le but c'est un petit peu de sortir les gens de la délinquance, du non-emploi, de l'inactivité, qui fait que tu traînes, t'as pas de but, et tu finis par tomber dans l'économie parallèle, le crime... Et quand je leur demande, ils disent qu'ils sont politiques, mais ils disent qu'il n'y a pas de projet politique pour Voukoum, qu'ils veulent simplement réorganiser la vie sociale par le culturel comme vecteur pour essayer de créer des meilleures conditions d'existence. Donc tu vois, c'est un point de vue un petit peu différent, mais les conditions socio-économiques sont différentes aussi: y a 35% de chômage...

Ouais, c'est du travail dans l'urgence quoi. C'est carrément une colonie [là-bas], comme à la Réunion, comme en Martinique, c'est régi vraiment par des schémas coloniaux, au premier degré, vraiment. Y a les Blancs riches, et les Noirs pauvres. Et la justice est rendue par les Blancs et s'exerce sur les Noirs. [...] C'est l'apartheid.

Donc est-ce qu'on pourrait émettre l'hypothèse que plus y a une séparation, une forte [ségrégation] économique, sociale, etc, plus y a une possibilité que la culture puisse jouer un rôle de vecteur ?

[...] Absolument, car la culture c'est la dernière chose qui reste à des gens à qui on a tout pris, tu vois, c'est toujours leur capacité à créer des univers, des mondes pour se « soigner » un petit peu de la cruauté du monde dans lequel ils vivent, dans le réel, et retrouver la force de rester debout, en restant ensemble. C'est un des derniers remparts à la déshumanisation. Tu regardes même en Palestine, y a une culture du chant, de la poésie extrêmement vivace, extrêmement puissante. [...]

➤ 11. Et à ce sujet, tu penses quoi du slam, justement ? [...]

J'aime pas Grand Corps Malade là, c'est barbant, c'est plombant, c'est pas super bien écrit, même si tout le monde s'extasie dessus. [...] Le slam, c'est forme la plus pauvre du rap, parce que c'est du rap a capella, [...] c'est né comme ça, ça vient du placard le slam. Le mec voilà il a même pas de platine, donc c'est vraiment l'art du pauvre parmi les pauvres [...]. Donc le slam à l'origine c'est ça. Bon maintenant, ici je trouve qu'on a tendance à en faire un peu un truc de petit bourgeois Blanc, pédant, un côté Saint-Germain-des-Prés, qui me fatigue. Je trouve que l'expression de l'urgence elle est encore beaucoup plus forte dans le rap et dans les quartiers...

A cause de la puissance du rythme [de l'instru]?

Non mais de l'urgence, je veux dire l'urgence de ce qui est dit dans les textes, de la manière dont c'est dit, alors que y a beaucoup de branlette dans le slam.

Mais est-ce parce que le mode de diffusion est plus limité, par exemple, on peut moins facilement en faire des objets culturels comme des CDs... ?

[...] Ouais, globalement, ça se commercialise peut-être un peu moins, ou plus difficilement, c'est quelque chose qui encore assez confidentiel, qui concerne que quelques initiés, quelques cercles [...]

Oui, mais il y a quand même quelque chose qu'on voit moins, ou moins facilement du moins [...] dans le rap, c'est la participation de tout le monde quoi, n'importe qui peut arriver et dire son texte...

Ouais, mais dans le rap aussi. Tu mets une version, tu mets un instru et n'importe qui peut venir poser.

Oui, mais y a plus de contraintes, t'as un rythme, une musique, alors que dans le slam t'as juste la rime et puis voilà...

C'est plus dur de rapper. N'importe quel rappeur peut slamer, mais n'importe quel slameur ne peut pas rapper. [...] T'as l'astreinte du rythme, de la mesure, du métronome. Y a un apprentissage de savoir poser ses mots dans la mesure, jouer avec les temps etc, et je trouve plus complexe, plus ardu [...] de rapper

un grand texte que celui de [le] slammer un grand texte, c'est plus difficile pour moi, dans ma pratique. [...] Parce que t'as d'autres trucs, et puis bon, quand t'as l'exigence du texte et du verbe, et que en plus y a l'astreinte de la musique, et y a toutes les exigences du flow aussi tu vois, de placer originalement tes mots, de les faire sonner, de mettre en valoir ton texte, tout en étant fondu dans la musique, tout en épousant la basse, tout en jouant avec les inflexions alors que le slam [...]

Et quand tu disais que le slam avait un côté Saint-Germain-des-Prés, enfin moi ce que je vois, c'est que c'est peut-être né dans les prisons, mais maintenant, en dehors des prisons, c'est essentiellement petit bourgeois...

Ben les Noir-Américains, qui slamment en prison, quand ils sortent de prison, ils prennent un instru, une fois qu'ils ont les moyens ils prennent un instru.

C'est ça. Donc le slam en soi en dehors de son contexte social de naissance, est-ce que ce que c'est pas un phénomène d'avant-garde, d'avant-garde Blanche, de la petite et moyenne ou parfois même grande bourgeoisie, tous ces trucs, tu vois, « artistes » qui cherchent un petit peu la distinction...

[...] Par rapport au rap qui est truffé d'arabes et de négros, des quartiers, avec leur vulgarité ouais c'est clair, bien sûr. Moi c'est ça qui me plaît pas, y a une forme de mépris même tu vois dans le slam, ça serait la « forme propre » contrairement au rap, [...] c'est la crasse quoi tu vois. Et ça c'est pas dit, mais tu le sens quoi. Tu vas dans un café slam, bon déjà c'est super ennuyeux, [...] y a rien qui parle au corps, c'est super cérébral, c'est chiant. Alors que dans le rap t'as la punch line, t'as la rime, et puis si tu veux décrocher d'une rime, t'écoutes juste le flow avec le son. [...] Ton corps reçoit des influx rythmiques, moi j'ai besoin, tu vois, quand j'écoute du pe-ra [rap], d'avoir envie de me lever, de bouger la tête [...]. Donc y a un côté work song aussi, donc voilà. Alors que dans le slam, c'est de la lecture de texte, moi j'ai fait ça une fois, je trouve ça chiant.[...]

- *12. Est-ce que pour toi la survie de la revendication, de la dénonciation qu'elle passe par le culturel ou par le politique ou par plus ou moins les deux ensemble, avec, comme on a dit, des croisement qui peuvent s'opérer, est-ce que ça passe par une sorte d'hybridité de la diffusion, des modes de diffusion, et des formes de médiation ? - c'est-à-dire, essayer de passer pas seulement par la radio mais aussi...*

Ben avant tout, avant tout y a la scène. Moi évidemment, [...] le disque en radio, [...] dans les voitures, y a le discours sur le disque dans la presse et dans les magazines, mais la scène pour moi c'est le moment de la sanction, par-dessus tous les autres. Un groupe de rap qui ne tient pas la scène, qui ne s'impose pas [...] ou qui sait pas se déployer sur scène [doit] travailler quoi. Etre un bon groupe de rap de studio, [...] un artiste radio c'est facile, parce que y a tous les artifices, tu peux tricher comme tu veux, couper, monter etc, mais sur la scène, c'est beaucoup plus difficile de tricher, et c'est plus immédiat. Et la sanction aussi est immédiate. Et un groupe de rap [...] qui déploie son entière expression, son entière puissance expressive, physique, musicale, poétique, textuelle, qui sait la déployer sur scène, c'est un bon groupe de rap.

Est-ce que ça a plus de puissance ? Est-ce que pour toi, la scène c'est plus puissant, dans son impact, que d'écouter un disque, ou la radio ?

Ouais ouais carrément.

Donc en fait, l'objet culturel, le disque ou le mode de diffusion par la radio, ou la télé même, ça a un rôle mais c'est pas une fin en soi: la fin en soi c'est la scène, c'est l'immédiat, c'est l'interaction directe avec le public, la rencontre ?

Le disque c'est une trace immortalisée d'œuvre, bon ben c'est important parce que c'est ça qui te fait croûter aussi en partie, mais là où vraiment je m'éclate c'est sur scène. Alors, en plus y a l'adrénaline, y a... tu sais c'est bandant la scène ; [...] là où vraiment on s'éclate, c'est avec les gens, c'est sur scène, entendre le son, nos musiques résonner, voir les effets que ça a

sur les gens, le retour aussi [direct, immédiat] de cette nuit de noce, de noce avec le public où la musique est l'élément qui structure le tout et qui permet ça [...], c'est des sensations que t'as nulle part ailleurs. En studio t'as pas de sensations, [...] pour le rap en particulier, [...] c'est plus de l'exécution, du travail liché. [Mais] c'est aussi la performance tu vois, car on est des partisans du *uncut* tu vois, du *one shot*, pas de coupure, pas de drop, etc [...] Moi, un texte de rap, c'est une tranche, c'est de la première à la dernière rime, ça doit être, la trace d'un battement cardiaque. C'est ton souffle, c'est ton cœur qui bat, [...] tes tripes, qui [...] pendant trois minutes trente, vont gérer, un texte, la scansion...

Y a une unité dans le texte, sinon c'est du patchwork, ça marche pas...

[...C]'est ça. Mais y en a qui travaillent beaucoup en *patchwork* tu vois, qui prennent le minimum de risques. Bon ben, quand tu travailles en *one shot*, évidemment, c'est pas parfait [...] Mais ça apporte autre chose aussi, c'est un choix artistique: ce qui est intéressant aussi c'est les défauts, c'est les petits obstacles, c'est les aspérités, c'est le grain, c'est la petite saleté que ça amène, c'est ce qui fait aussi tout l'intérêt, avec un caractère organique aussi tu vois. [...C]'est la trace intègre, authentique d'un moment, d'une performance sous-tendue par un rythme cardiaque, y a ce côté-là aussi.

Et donc tu dirais que les arts vivants [ont] plus de puissance du fait qu'y a une interaction avec un public [...] que la médiation par l'image, le cinéma par exemple ?

Ah non non, je dis pas qu'il y a plus de puissance, pas du tout, c'est différent. Pour un art, que ce soit de la musique ou du théâtre, t'es toujours beaucoup plus aspiré, et t'es toujours récepteur de plus d'impact quand t'y assistes réellement, en vivant, en étant au milieu de la salle avec les gens, plutôt que de regarder une pièce de théâtre [...] ou un concert à la télé, ou un disque à la radio, quoi forcément. Mais pour un film c'est différent: ça ne peut être vu que dans ce cadre là. [...]

- *13. Et enfin, j'avais une question sur le compromis, justement par rapport aux médias, et à la diffusion. Qu'est-ce que tu penses de toutes les participations aux émissions de télé, y a forcément un compromis qui s'opère là-dedans, vous arrivez à rester vous-mêmes tout en restant à la marge ? Est-ce que c'est une bonne idée d'essayer d'aller se faire entendre dans ces contextes là [...] ? Pourquoi vous avez décidé d'aller à la télé ?*

[...O]n revendique pas une quelconque marge que ce soit. Nous on fait de la musique, en espérant être entendu, écouté, par les gens. Après, c'est le dispositif télévisuel qui veut ça aussi [...On a] décidé d'aller à la télévision, pour donner de la visibilité à notre projet et aussi pour répondre à une nécessité qui était de faire connaître l'histoire de notre procès, de la médiatiser. A l'approche du procès, il était hors de question qu'on reste dans notre coin à se faire becqueter par la 17^{ème} [chambre correctionnelle], ou par je ne sais quel procureur, donc il a fallu médiatiser, ça faisait partie aussi de la stratégie de défense. Mais au-delà de ça, à la télé, on est pas non plus le groupe que tu vois le plus à la télé, on fait peut-être une télé par an en moyenne [...] voilà, puis c'est de la promo. Et puis y a plein de trucs qu'on a refusé aussi.

Et est-ce qu'y a eu des moments où il y a des trucs qui ont échappé un peu à votre contrôle et vous avez pas été satisfaits de comment [...] on a traité ce que vous avez dit ?

Ben, ce qui nous a échappé, c'est la possibilité, l'espace pour s'exprimer, notamment chez Fogiel, où on te coupe la parole, mais bon ça on le savait en arrivant. Mais ce qu'on a dit, ce qu'on a pu dire, ça nous a pas échappé, on est restés maîtres de ce qu'on a voulu dire, même si c'était l'hystérie en face. Et puis je trouve qu'on s'en est bien sorti, car étrangement, ce soir-là, contrairement à ce que les préjugés auraient voulu, c'était un Noir, un Arabe, qui s'expriment dans un français très correct, calmement, [...] qui défendent [...] des idées peu consensuelles quand même, en gardant leur calme,

tu vois, face à des gens qui nous aboient dessus. [...] Donc je pense qu'on s'en est bien sortis aussi parce qu'on a pas été de bons client pour eux à leurs yeux, on s'est pas mis à parler avec les mains et à leur sortir des insultes de cage d'escalier...

Vous avez pas fait Joey Starr quoi...

Ouais voilà, exactement. Donc on est restés maîtres de notre humeur. Bon on voyait qu'on était un petit peu en train de bouillir, parce qu'on nous provoquait, on aurait aimé qu'on aboie, tu vois, qu'on éructe comme ça, et c'est tout l'inverse qui s'est passé, c'est eux en fait qui se sont excités tous seuls. Donc voilà, donc on laissait passer les glaviots, [...] et puis très calmement, on essaie de revenir au procès. Même si on avait eu dix minutes de temps de parole blanc ouvert, la télé fait que... La télé est le média de l'instant, une idée chasse l'autre, un image chasse l'autre, un signal publicitaire chasse l'autre, donc ouais, y a quelque chose de vain à vouloir convaincre par les idées à la télé, surtout quand c'est des idées peu connues, un peu complexes [...] Faudrait beaucoup plus de temps, faudrait deux heures, trois heures, pour faire des démonstrations, des trucs pédagogiques, du documentaire presque, mais là, t'es pas dans ce cadre-là. Et à la télévision, c'est pas les mots que tu retiens, c'est les images, [...] les expressions du visage, c'est ça qui transpire de la télévision. La télévision, [...] c'est pas fait pour être cérébral, comme le cinéma d'ailleurs aussi: l'image, elle parle d'abord aux sens. Et puis y a le dispositif. Tu peux dire quelque chose d'extrêmement intelligent, [...] de très juste, un truc qui va sauver l'humanité, les gens vont oublier ce que t'es en train de dire, si le long de ton front, là, sur ta tempe, t'as une goutte de sueur, tu vois qui descend. C'est pour ça, moi passer à la télévision ça me terrorise [...] parce qu'on a des choses à défendre, qu'on sent de l'hostilité, pqu'on pense qu'il faut que l'honneur du groupe soit sauf, et qu'à chaque fois y a des étincelles. Chez Ardisson on s'était retrouvés avec Malek Bouhti, bon là, [...] encore y a des choses qui ont été coupées, mais jte jure, il a fini l'interview, il était blême, [...] franchement, on s'est essuyés les pieds sur sa gueule. [...]

Et qu'est-ce que tu penses de cette utilisation qu'on fait des rappeurs comme ambassadeurs des quartiers populaires, qu'on les fasse participer à des émissions politiques, etc comme lors de la révolte de novembre... ?

Ben c'est dire le divorce des quartiers avec la politique politicienne. Y a plus aucun politicien, homme politique ou femme politique qui a la légitimité de parler des quartiers. Plus aucun, je me demande si y en déjà eu un. Et Malek Bouhti encore moins. Et parmi les rares voix qui peuvent avoir encore une légitimité et une crédibilité à parler de ça, et qui donc investissent ou ont investi la place publique avec leurs disques, c'est souvent des rappeurs. Dommage parce que y a plein de militants, y a plein de gens qu'on pourrait faire parler, et parce que ça rassure aussi de faire parler des artistes car leur activité c'est de vendre des disques. Et y a plein de gens dans les quartiers, des gens qui font de la politique, qu'on pourrait interroger, interviewer... [...]

3. Saïdou Dias from Ministère des Affaires Populaires

I interviewed Saïdou Dias from MAP in a café in Lille on 6th November 2007, at a time when the band had decided to take a break from the stage after a series of tours and gigs for 18 months. MAP released another album in 2009, *Les bronzés font du ch'ti* followed by a tour. Since then, the members of MAP have taken two separate initiatives with HK leading the act *HK et les Saltimbanques* and Saïdou Dias at the forefront of ZEP (*Zone d'Expression Populaire*) – a musical project also featuring the collaboration of sociologist Saïd Bouamama towards a record and book about the postcolonial condition of *Indigènes de la République*. In that sense, the interview here came at an interesting moment of transition and partial summary of the MAP experience. Here are some excerpts of the interview:

➤ 1. *Par quoi on va commencer... Donc là vous en êtes où ? Vous allez faire un deuxième album... ?*

On est... là on vient de faire une tournée. On vient de finir un peu plus d'un an et demi de tournée [...] Voilà. [...] Entre les morceaux t'es fatigué, tu sais, t'es essoufflé, et tu sens qu'à un moment, t'as un public en face de toi, t'as un idée politique, mais t'es crevé, t'es pas lucide quoi ! Et t'essayes de sortir tes mots, un argumentaire avant une chanson enfin voilà ! Et t'arrives pas, et tu bafouilles... et finalement t'es pas clair politiquement...

Peut-être faut s'y prendre à plusieurs fois, la première fois c'est dur et après...

Oui, mais c'est dur, c'est dû à une fatigue, à l'euphorie, l'essoufflement, la mauvaise condition physique, t'es à une heure et demie de concert, t'es crevé et tout, et c'est pas réel, en plus t'es en euphorie quoi. [...] et t'arrives à essayer de sortir un argumentaire politique et tout t'arrives même plus ! Tu te dis « Putain, j'ai imaginé un truc dans ma tête », t'arrives même pas à le... ça t'arrive, ça t'arrive. L'impro, à bout de souffle, crevé, complètement euphorique d'un concert, l'impro politique c'est compliqué, c'est très compliqué, parce que t'as du mal à être organisé à avoir des idées organisées.

Surtout que c'est pas la même chose, la pratique artistique et...

Sûr [...] Mais l'argumentaire, tout ça, c'est compliqué.

[Et votre prochain album,] c'est pour quand ?

On sait pas, réellement. On espère... on va voir quoi. Là on s'en va demain, en studio.

Ah c'est en studio que vous allez [demain] ?

C'est pas un studio, c'est un labo. Un pti labo de 4-5 jours ensemble, pour vraiment mettre un pti coup de boost, parce qu'on l'a pas fait depuis janvier.

Et puis quand vous êtes ici, ya toujours des trucs qui se passent...

C'est ça oui. Ceux qui ont des gosses, ceux qui ont des trucs à côté et tout, on se laisse vite déborder et tout... Ceux qui ont une vie de famille, c'est compliqué, ils ont du mal à rester ici à Lille et à s'enfermer vraiment pendant une semaine quoi.

Parce que vous vous attendiez pas non plus à un tel impact ?

Non, je pense que c'est pas une question d'impact, c'est une question de charge de travail. Que t'aies un bon impact ou un petit impact peu importe je crois qu'on fait ça avec passion, enfin c'est comme ça que j'envisage la musique. Et faire les choses avec perfectionnisme tu sais, et faire bien, et prendre le temps. Et que ce soit bien reçu ou mal reçu j'm'en fous.

Non mais ce que je veux dire c'est que ça a pris une ampleur qui donne envie de s'investir plus, de donner encore plus et tout ça, tu vois ?

Ouais c'est sûr, c'est une pression. Encore une fois je pense que tout ça ça doit pas influencer l'envie. Parce qu'on fait... j'allais dire un métier-passion

mais c'est même pas ça, on a une passion. Qui devient un métier aujourd'hui. Et elle est là la pression, c'est qu'à un moment, tu vois, c'est tout bête hein, mais d'où on vient, ça a de l'importance. On est sur la route aujourd'hui, on est [...] neuf personnes sur la route, c'est des familles aussi, c'est des enfants aussi.

Vous avez qui en plus ?

Ingénieur du son, ingénieur lumières, road manager, et tout ça quoi. Mais à un moment, tu mets 9 personnes sur la route, avec ton projet artistique, et tu te rends compte que ta musique elle nourrit des gens, elle nourrit des familles aussi. Et là quand tu dis l'année prochaine on est en tournée tout ça, c'est un enjeu pour des familles aussi, c'est pas rien ça. Pour moi c'est une pression ça. Moi d'où je viens c'est une pression de dire « je vais pas prendre à la légère, que certains de mes musiciens, ils ont des enfants à nourrir, faut pas le prendre à la légère. C'est fou hein ! Mais ça devrait pas normalement, influencer mon artistique. Mais tu vois, nous euh... aujourd'hui, parce que je viens d'une famille, nombreuse tout ça, enfin pas si nombreuse que ça mais bon, d'une famille d'ouvriers, moi je sais ce que c'est qu'à un moment, le père de famille, il puisse pas boucler la fin du mois. Donc voilà, tu vois cette pression là, quand même, mes potes là, ils doivent nourrir leurs gosses, avec l'intermittence tout ça, et ça dépendra du comment ton album va être reçu.

Mais du coup est-ce que ça influence...

La création ?

Pas que la création, mais aussi la diffusion, et le mode de diffusion, genre, vaut peut-être mieux passer par certains médias etc, tu vois ?

Bien sûr ça influence. Ça influence les envies, ça influence... non mais c'est sûr, de passer du côté obscur, c'est certain, tous les jours. [...] De toutes façons, aujourd'hui, on est interviewés, on est passés sur les médias de toutes façons qui appartiennent à des grands groupes industriels et compagnie tu vois, franchement, Bouygues, Bolloré, Pinault... Enfin tu vois, que tu sois sur des télé, que tu sois sur des radios du câble, avec Bolloré sur Direct 8 ou sur des journaux gratuits, de toutes façons t'es toujours sur des espaces des médias qui appartiennent... à la Haute quoi, à la haute bourgeoisie française qui nous méprise, qui s'en fout plein les poches. [...] En France ya une caractéristique c'est que tu vois les grands médias, les grands journaux actionnent pas... des rédacteurs, comme tu vois à l'étranger, enfin tu vois c'est incroyable. Donc tu vois la liberté, la liberté d'expression tout ça, la liberté d'information, le devoir de... enfin tout ça, t'y crois moyennement. Après nous de toutes façons, on pourrait boycotter - je pense qu'on va y venir - mais aujourd'hui faut faire le constat que, on est de toutes façons, dans le matrix.

➤ *2. Et ya aussi le fait que vous soyez aussi dépendants de contrats que vous avez fait avec les maisons de disques...*

On est sur une toute petite maison de disques lilloise qui en licence chez Pias. La maison de disques indépendante produit le disque et vend l'exploitation à Pias, c'est-à-dire que Pias s'occupe de toute l'exploitation, la communication, la distribution aussi. Voilà comment ça fonctionne. La maison de disques gagne 20% du disque, et Pias 80. La maison de disques nous refile 10%. Ca fait 80, 10, 10.

Et du coup, vous allez essayer d'avoir une autonomie économique ou... ?

Ouais, ouais moi, j'en rêve. C'est hyper compliqué pour nous parce qu'on sait pas faire - vraiment quoi. Et c'est tellement d'enjeux... d'enjeux humains entre nous que finalement on se dit... Ah mais nous on sait pas le faire quoi, aujourd'hui je peux pas être leader d'un groupe, et en même temps être le patron, enfin financier, c'est un truc de fou. C'est une bombe atomique dans le groupe si ya de l'argent qui est en jeu et tout ça c'est... tu vois, tu te rends compte le rapport humain ça devient des rapports de fric. Oui toi t'as

telle part de marché, toi telle part de marché, parce que c'est ça. C'est quelque chose que nous, on sait pas faire. Avoir aujourd'hui des postures d'associés, tu vois, on fait de la musique, des postures d'associés, business, chantage et tout. Bon on sait qu'on a des managers tout ça, ce qui sert à vendre les disques sur les concerts, et à vendre les T-shirts et tout ça, sur lesquels on fait quasi pas de marge, mais en tournée ya quand même des excédents. Mais nous, on met même pas notre nez là-dedans. Je sais pas faire parce que je trouve qu'il y a trop d'enjeux...

Ouais, vous vous sentez pas... [...] les épaules de faire ce genre de truc, sachant que ça peut...

Non, c'est pas une question, non, je me sens largement capable... enfin c'est un peu prétentieux... C'est plus sur un point de vue humain, de se dire, on est entre artistes tu vois, et pas entre associés. Et moi, pour l'instant je sais pas faire, je sais pas basculer. Mais tu vois, je pense que ça serait l'idéal aussi pour nous, tu vois, vraiment...

La liberté... qui paye quoi !?

Ouais c'est ça.

Mais au niveau du rayonnement, c'est beaucoup de... tu tires la langue après aussi...

Ah ben carrément ! C'est sûr, c'est sûr. Et puis c'est difficilement viable, dans la durée. Réellement. Parce que si la durée de ton disque, elle est pas viable... Mais finalement, même quand tu deviens indépendant, autonome, t'utilises les mêmes réseaux que les maisons de disques, c'est la tchatche. Tu sais tous les groupes indépendants tout ça c'est pilonné pour eux, parce que tu réutilises les mêmes réseaux, tu réutilises les mêmes attachés de presse, tu réutilises les mêmes stratégies les mêmes techniques. Après c'est sûr que c'est pas clair parce que t'as pas le temps, tu vois, ça coûte trop cher. Mais moi tu vois, j'en rêve de ça...

Et tu penses quoi justement de l'exemple de La Rumeur qui font leurs trucs ?

Ah mais, tu vois La Rumeur, chapeau quoi. [...] Non mais La Rumeur ils sont passés en major aussi avant.

Ouais ouais bien sûr. Mais le choix a été justement de passer par là pour pouvoir avoir les moyens de...

Bien sûr. Après moi je suis content aujourd'hui d'être dans un label indépendant, tu vois, à taille humaine. Tu vois c'est ça qui est intéressant aussi. Tu vois notre label indépendant, il fait pas de singles, tu vois le manager, c'est un anar, je veux dire on se comprend quand on papote quoi.

Ouais et ça c'est vachement important.

Tu vois on peut se parler...

Vous essayez de faire primer d'abord l'humain avant...

Ouais, même si ya aussi du business. Mais si on était en indépendant y aurait du business aussi. Mais ça va, être dans un petit label indépendant c'est... Pour l'instant, on est dans un petit label indépendant. Pour moi c'est sur le plan humain que c'est positif.

- *3. Et pour toi la diffusion, par le produit culturel, le CD, tout ça la diffusion ? C'est important aussi que les gens ils puissent écouter ta musique s'ils peuvent pas toujours venir au concert...*

Pour être sincère avec toi, moi je suis dans un groupe où... enfin tu vois je suis dans un groupe quoi, tout le monde a son mot à dire, surtout sur la tournée puisqu'on est un groupe de scène, mais moi, j'ai pas envie de vendre des albums, voilà. C'est peut-être pas le cas de toute l'équipe tu vois, mais moi j'ai pas envie des disques d'or tout ça... Je rêve pas de vendre des disques...

Tu te vois pas en haut de l'affiche ?

Voilà. Non pas du tout. Je rêve pas d'avoir un prix à la télé là, je sais plus comment ça s'appelle là [...] les Victoires de la Musique. C'est quelque chose qui me fait pas envie, moi ce que j'ai envie c'est d'être sur le terrain, faire des concerts, tu vois ? Mais malheureusement, quand t'appelles une salle de concert, tu dis « voilà c'est MAP, je voudrais qu'on joue », ils te demandent le gars, « tu vends combien de disques ? » !

Tu pèses combien...

C'est ça, tu pèses combien. Non mais je comprends la réalité économique. Ça m'est arrivé: « MAP on m'a pas rappelé... Attends on vend 15000 exemplaires on en vendait 3000 ! ». Et le mec il me fait: « Ouais super ». Et tu vas dans la salle, une salle de 300 personnes, ben ya que 110 personnes. Tu vois c'est sérieux ça. Et tu comprends que le mec il dise bon, je fais ça là, je le fais deux fois dans l'année. Maintenant je vais faire que des groupes qui vendent beaucoup de disques. Tu vois, tout le monde est tenu par les couilles finalement. A un moment tu te dis moi mon rêve, Saïd, le mien, c'est de faire que des concerts, et j'ai pas envie de vendre des albums quoi...

Et pourquoi pour tu trouves ça plus important de... pourquoi c'est plus le concert qui te motive ?

Parce que je suis musicien avant tout pour partager des choses avec des gens. [...] Après je pourrais mettre tous mes titres sur Internet. Tu vois j'en ai vraiment rien à foutre quoi, je pourrais offrir toutes mes chansons, mais par contre je demanderais aux gens de venir nous voir en concert, tu vois. Voilà, cadeau, je vous offre tous mes albums, c'est mon album j'aimerais bien l'offrir, et en contrepartie vous venez au concert quoi, tu vois, on se partage un truc. On offre l'album et vous nous offrez le public.

Ouais ouais, à prix libre quoi...

Ouais mais je rêverais de ça, je rêverais de ça. Et prendre la rue quoi. Le problème c'est que tu vois, la rue... [...] ça nous appartient même plus parce qu'elle nous appartient même plus, c'est un Etat policier.

- *4. Et justement tous les concerts en plein air que vous avez fait je sais plus yavait le Souk Populaire, et d'autres... pour vous c'est important de jouer dans ces espaces-là ?*

Ben je crois qu'aujourd'hui tu fais pas de musique pour faire des grosses scènes. T'as des ventes de disques, tu compenses avec des radios etc, pour pouvoir le rendre. C'est comme quand quelqu'un qui monte sur un arbre avec une échelle, quand tu veux redescendre de l'arbre, essaie d'utiliser la même échelle, tu vois ? Ça veut dire, rend aux gens, si quelqu'un t'a fait la courte échelle, faut repasser par là quoi. Et je crois que nous, on est influencés, parce que tu vois ce qu'on raconte dans nos textes c'est influencé, c'est de la base quoi. On raconte des expériences, on raconte... tu vois ? On raconte des vies, on raconte des histoires, moi j'ai envie, j'ai envie de les rendre quoi aux gens parce que c'est les gens qui nous envoient là. Et quand tu fais un concert sur la place... disons à République, on avait fait un concert tu vois, sur le trottoir. Parce que à un moment c'était pendant une période de crise de mobilisation etc, yavait essoufflement, et on essayait de créer un contre-pouvoir, essayer de créer aussi - comment dire ? - un rapport de force surtout. Créer un rapport de force avec la préfecture, avec l'Etat policier de Sarkozy, et le seul moyen de créer un rapport de force, c'est de mobiliser, mais un rapport de force, c'est le nombre...

Et justement est-ce que tu penses que la musique est un vecteur ?

Ouais, donc je termine je termine... donc nous on tourne beaucoup on a un public etc, et à un moment, c'est mon rôle, enfin, en tant que chanteur de MAP, de dire « ok, le public est là, le nôtre, putain mais... allez, on fait le concert dans la rue là ! ». Et nous là, on a, en fin de manif, on a fait un concert sur la place sur les pavés quoi ! On a ramené les enceintes bing bing bing bing ! Et on a mis, on a mis 2000 personnes sur la place. Tu vois, tu vois t'aimerais trop à un moment de participer... à une rencontre entre les gens. Les

gens qui écoutent la musique ou pas, certains qui adhèrent certains écoutent la musique, mais c'est participer à une rencontre. Tu vois tu parlais de « est-ce que la musique sert à quelque chose dans ces cas-là pour les luttes », mais putain tu vois, quand est-ce que les gens ils se rencontrent dans une société ? Non mais quand ? Où ? Tu vois ? C'est... parce que tu vois, j'adore le MAP ce qui disent etc le discours, mais euh c'est tout ! Tu vois c'est le public. Mais à un moment tu peux créer un espace de rencontre, après faut savoir utiliser l'espace. Le folklore tu vois c'est super, ça permet d'ouvrir machin tout ça. D'ouvrir quoi. Mais c'est pas suffisant. Je pense qu'aujourd'hui, comme on n'a plus d'espace, on n'a pas d'espace la presse est complètement accaparée, complètement récupérée, [l'important] c'est d'ouvrir l'espace, dans la rue, c'est favoriser les rencontres, favoriser les échanges, favoriser l'information, favoriser la mobilisation, on a pas le choix ! Et là on a un projet là nous on a un projet MAP, c'est qu'à chaque concert, [...] à l'endroit où on joue, on veut qu'il y ait des stands, des stands associatifs avec les luttes qui nous touchent et [dont] on parle dans nos textes. Parce que si t'adhères à ce qu'on dit dans le texte tu tournes la tête juste à gauche là, y aura un stand qui tente de faire signer une pétition, avec de l'information. Tu lèves le poing, t'adhères, ben si t'adhères, CQFD tu vois.

Donc c'est aussi essayer de se réapproprier... - comment on dit ça ? - c'est-à-dire que la musique elle soit pas là juste pour divertir mais aussi parce que ça vient de quelque part et que...

C'est ça tu vois, mais les deux tu vois...

Ouais mais renvoyer... que la forme culturelle soit reprise dans sa totalité au niveau de l'expression humaine tu vois, collective...

Ben nous on l'a fait là dans les concerts on l'a testé parce que, c'est vraiment aujourd'hui, pour nous c'est important. Les gens vivent l'un à côté de l'autre, mais pas ensemble tu sais [...] On a compté c'était notre dernier concert lillois où on a fait mettre un stand Palestine, un stand sans-papiers, un stand réseau recherche-concerts, et un stand sur la question des prisons, de l'enfermement. Là tu vois, vraiment, à côté du public. Et effectivement, on fait un bilan à la fin avec les amis, les camarades qui tiennent les stands où le mec il te dit « putain mais c'est fou quoi, y'avait des gens ils connaissaient pas et ils avaient réellement envie » tu sens qu'ya des missions, tu galvanises les troupes en fait. C'est pour ça que t'as la pression aussi. Tu galvanises les troupes, putain c'est fort quoi ! Et puis on est là on est en équipe, c'est un exemple [...] et moi j'ai envie de créer une histoire collective qui part de la base. Les gens comme tu disais tout à l'heure les gens ils sont divisés parce que chacun sa lutte chacun ses p'tits problèmes chacun ses p'tites routines ou chacun ses projets d'action, et à un moment toi tu montres aux gens que finalement ça concerne qu'une partie de la société seulement finalement et que [...] finalement, vous avez un truc en commun c'est que vous êtes dans la même classe quoi !

➤ *5. Donc vous revenez au paradigme... de la lecture par... enfin de la classe sociale quoi !? Avec aussi la problématique postcoloniale aussi ?*

Ouais, après c'est sûr qu'ya un débat schizophrène autour de ça c'est: de quelle classe, à quelle classe j'appartiens ? C'est sûr, c'est super intéressant et là j'en parle à bâtons rompus parce que je m'interroge aussi [...] Puis se dire à quelle classe t'appartiens, c'est délicat aujourd'hui d'imaginer qu'on puisse être dans une classe dominante, d'être un dominant, et d'accepter d'être un dominant, c'est ce qui est compliqué aussi. [...] Pour moi ya deux classes dominantes, mais qui sont distinctes pour moi, c'est la classe dominante on va dire socialement, c'est-à-dire les riches, et on va parler de la classe dominante racialement, qui sont la classe occidentale blanche de culture chrétienne quoi.

Et ya une tendance à avoir une corrélation super forte entre les deux en France quoi...

Ah mais complètement ! [...] Mais ça veut dire quoi dominer ? C'est juste un terme très fort quoi. Ça veut dire quoi dominer, ça veut dire avoir beaucoup

de marge par rapport aux autres tu comprends t'es dans une posture tu vois de privilégié. Moi je crois qu'on peut parler de corps privilégié, et de classe non privilégiée. Je crois que ça serait plus approprié aujourd'hui pour créer une vraie corrélation entre la classe dominée socialement et la classe dominée racialement. Parce que c'est délicat de dire à un dominé socialement blanc de lui dire « tu fais partie de la classe des dominants », tu vois ? Et puis c'est pas rassembleur. Et par contre il est pas, il fait pas partie des privilégiés, je suis entièrement d'accord. Ya un moment faut pas se rêcher derrière son pilau non plus, ya un moment où le tapis des privilèges de toutes façons c'est aux Blancs, que tu sois ouvrier ou pas ouvrier par rapport à un Noir ouvrier de toutes façons le Blanc ouvrier aura plus de privilèges donc des fois il peut basculer finalement par rapport à l'autre en tant que dominant. Parce que finalement la classe des mâles la classe des femelles, on est aussi dans la classe de dominants à dominés quoi ! Moi aujourd'hui, je suis pas complexé, enfin si je peux en être complexé mais je me sens pas vexé si on va me dire que tu fais partie de la classe des dominants de cette planète pour ce qui la classe masculine Hommes quoi, tu vois mâle !

Ouais mais t'as quelque chose de dominant à un certain niveau et t'as moins de privilèges sur d'autres critères...

Mais comment aujourd'hui pouvoir créer... comment aujourd'hui pouvoir créer un mouvement des dominés sans... parce que tu sais, dans les classes populaires, le dominé socialement, tu vois les pauvres dans les quartiers etc, [t'as] des postures réellement racistes, xénophobes, méprisantes, post-colonialistes, tu vois ? Ceux de la classe ouvrière. Et je crois que...

Ouais, yavait un bouquin justement hyper bien que j'ai lu là-dessus qui expliquait... ça s'appelle La gauche et les cités, enquête sur un rendez-vous manqué⁶⁴⁸ et qui expliquait justement que tout ça en fait ça avait été... pas manipulé mais que finalement, les gens se sont fait instrumentalisés par...

Mais évidemment. Evidemment. Comment tu veux que le gamin qui se fait traiter de sale bougnoule par un mec du Front National... [Car] dans son quartier comme ils sont majoritaires - ben c'est une réalité aussi - ils sont majoritaires, mais prolétaires, et voilà, ils sont majoritaires Front National, le Front National fait 30% dans certains quartiers c'est un truc de fou ici dans le Nord c'est incroyable quoi - Roubaix tout ça Tourcoing... Et [après] que le gamin on lui ait fait comprendre qu'il est un sous-citoyen, qu'un sous-homme, qu'une merde quoi, qu'un indigène, [comment veux-tu que] finalement il se dise: ben finalement on est du même côté de la barrière ? C'est compliqué tu vois...

Et puis après dans la construction de toi, tu vis ça au quotidien quand t'es petit, c'est quand même super violent, tu vois ce que je veux dire ?

Ben ouais et moi je comprends aujourd'hui, que les gamins de quartier ils se disent « moi je vais faire de l'oseille ». A un moment pour que moi je puisse avoir du respect dans cette société, pour que je sois autre chose que traité comme un chien, faut que je sois un mec qui brasse du pognon. Et mon p'tit frère c'est ce qu'il se dit, il me dit « putain, partout où je vais où j'ouvre la porte, c'est le Bougnoule ! Aujourd'hui mon projet c'est faire de l'oseille. Que je pèse, que je puisse être libre ». Parce que ça la liberté malheureusement, c'est payé en fait par l'argent, tu vois ? Et finalement les gamins des quartiers c'est eux qui sont le plus poussés à être...

...à reproduire le truc de...

...ben du libéralisme, thatcherisme, et du reaganisme. [...] Donc finalement tu vois on parlait de lutte, [... d'être] unis [...] c'est mort quoi !

...c'est ça, diviser pour mieux régner...

Diviser pour mieux régner ! On est en train d'écrire une chanson là-dessus en plus, enfin on est en train d'essayer, c'est pas sûr que ça soit sur le 2^{ème}

⁶⁴⁸ Reference to Olivier Masclet's 2003 book *La gauche et les cités: enquête sur un rendez-vous manqué* (Paris: La Dispute)

album mais on a des chansons comme ça des fois qui sont en parallèle... diviser pour mieux régner !

➤ 6. Et pour vous unir tous les trucs fragmentés, les ch'tis, tous fragmentés tout ça, c'est vachement important ?

Comment réussir ? [...] Mais je crois qu'il faut soigner aussi, se soigner...

Soigner dans quel sens ?

Soigner ben comment dire ? Ou guérir...

D'accord. Non parce qu'il y a soigner aussi = faire attention, tu vois ? Soigner le style, soigner...

Ah non non, tu vois, il faut aller guérir, il faut aller tuer le vrai problème tu vois ? Aujourd'hui... enfin tu connais, en plus on fréquente les mêmes gens, tu vois les mêmes courants de pensée, c'est dénoncé par le MIB⁶⁴⁹ depuis des années, qui passaient à l'époque pour des islamo-gauchistes complètement radicaux... qui osaient...

Non c'est pas qu'ils passaient c'est...

Ouais qui passaient aux yeux des...

Pour les neutraliser quoi voilà !

Ouais, ouais c'est ça, exactement. Qu'on faisait passer voilà. On les faisait passer pour des espèces de tarés d'extrême gauche, bougnoule [...] Enfin si tu veux, ils allaient chercher les vraies causes du racisme, dénoncer un racisme qui était systémique, un racisme qui était un mécanisme culturel historique, dû à une posture coloniale, postcoloniale. [...] Une posture qui reste] inchangée, qui se transmet de père en fils, de société en société, de président en président, de patron en patron, de dominé en dominé, et qui fait que c'est complètement verrouillé, et ça c'est dénoncé depuis des années ! Et aujourd'hui ça commence à peine à être respecté parce que certains intellectuels blancs dominés, ont réussi à intégrer par exemple tu vois... [...] En réalité, il faut] réussir à donner de vraies causes au racisme. Parce que finalement la colonie française, elle a aujourd'hui une histoire qui n'a pas été dénoncée tu vois, donc c'est important de dénoncer quelque chose qui est complètement occulté, dénoncer les causes du racisme qui sont dues à une histoire coloniale...

Maintenant au niveau de la visibilité médiatique, c'est les Indigènes de la République, qui se chargent un peu de traiter cette question...

Bien sûr, je fais partie des Indigènes de la République. J'adhère complètement à cette idée de dénonciation. Dénoncer les structures coloniales qui existent en France et qui ont été omniprésentes, mais personne n'a osé mettre le doigt dessus.

Mais ça n'est pas si simple si tu regardes de l'autre côté: quand t'es blanc, je peux te dire que dans ton enfance tout ce que tu vois autour de toi, ce sont des trucs que tu apprends à reproduire, tu apprends à être colon quoi...

Exactement, j'avais une copine avant, une amoureuse, et elle me disait: « ma grand-mère quand j'étais petite elle me disait attention les Arabes ils sont fourbes et on peut pas leur faire confiance, regarde ça se voit dans leur nez et dans leurs yeux ». Ca c'est les stigmates tu vois des indigènes, c'est des fourbes. Non mais attention c'était comme ça dans toutes les régions du monde où la France avait des colonies: les noirs étaient gais, sympas, très forts et qui courent vite etc...

Des animaux quoi...

Ouais, et les Arabes faut pas leur faire confiance, ils étaient fourbes. C'est des machins qui sont restés. Ce sont des restes de transmission, d'analyse coloniale. Et quand ma copine qui me dit « voilà ma grand mère elle me disait ça sur les Arabes », elle me disait ça en 2000, en '99 un truc comme ça... Tu te

⁶⁴⁹ MIB: Mouvement de l'Immigration et des Banlieues.

dis putain on est loin de s'en sortir ! Parce que finalement au début du siècle, y'avait encore des zoos en France avec des expositions etc... des zoos humains. Et il y a encore une mémoire vivante de ça. Et donc pour l'instant dire qu'on est sauvés de ce côté là, j'y crois pas vraiment. Et puis je pense qu'aujourd'hui on a remis un petit coup de marche arrière avec Hortefeux, Sarkozy et tout ça, leur projet Fillon et compagnie là... C'est leurs projets réac qui dit que l'identité nationale est en danger, l'identité nationale française de souche, gauloise, du Moyen-Age, ceci-cela... [...] Une marche arrière là en 2007: la création du Ministère de l'Identité Nationale est aussi lié à cette crainte, cette communication anti-Islam aussi, de l'islamisation de la France et compagnie là...

Oui non mais c'est aussi parce qu'ils n'ont plus les communistes donc maintenant c'est à fond anti-islamique... L'impérialisme doit toujours avoir un ennemi, pour pouvoir continuer à coloniser, à piller...

C'est fou, c'est un truc de dingue. Et là Sarkozy il fait le bon boulot, de ce côté là il fait du bon boulot. Nan mais c'est vrai, un bon lobbying catho, blanc [...] Mais le problème c'est que Sarkozy il a les médias avec lui. [...] Et] aujourd'hui on s'éduque avec quoi ? On s'éduque avec la télé et quand tu vois que la semaine dernière il y a le directeur de TF1, qui est la télé la plus regardée en France, qui dîne avec Sarkozy et bien il y a un moment où les choses sont claires, les choses sont très claires. L'ami de Sarkozy c'est le plus gros média français aujourd'hui, c'est lui le patron. Et Sarkozy qui a une politique raciste avec ses positions sur Israël... pour moi c'est le pire. Les battements d'ailes d'un papillon peuvent avoir des répercussions énormes à l'autre bout de la planète. Et je pense qu'en termes d'égalité aujourd'hui, quand tu sais ce qui se passe en Palestine, une situation qui aujourd'hui déchaîne aussi des passions en France - qui sont justifiées. Et là, pareil on nous fait passer pour des abrutis, mal éduqués avec une mauvaise lecture de l'histoire, trop passionnés, et on est encore une fois de plus stigmatisés, 'islamo-gauchistes' etc... Et ton président de ta République, du pays des droits de l'Homme, de la démocratie, de liberté-égalité-fraternité qui te dit « tu dois, attention tes devoirs, etc etc... attention les droits etc... ». Et en même temps qui prend des positions très claires et très franches, à mon goût, sur Israël, à l'endroit où les droits de l'Homme sont plus que bafoués, c'est inhumain, il y a un génocide. Moi je ne me sens pas du tout représenté. Et il y a toute une frange de la population française qui ne se sent pas du tout représentée par Sarkozy ou par l'opposition. Je pense que l'homme qui incarne aujourd'hui la France crée une réaction épidermique, allergique chez une autre partie de la société...

- *7. Le côté positif du truc c'est qu'au moins c'est clair!! Pas à la « vas-y que je t'embrouille » comme les gens de gauche: je te dis un discours mais en fait je fait tout le contraire dans la pratique. Je trouve que la comédie libérale, le jeu de Sarkozy et de tout le monde c'est de prendre les mots et de les travestir. C'est d'approprier des mots comme liberté et de leur donner un sens assez spécifique et orienté... Et ça marche aussi avec la musique, ça devient une sorte de divertissement, déconnecté de la culture, de l'histoire...*

C'est du sabotage en réalité. C'est du sabotage de gens qui travaillent au quotidien, qui luttent au quotidien, qui ont des postures honnêtes de militants. Et même si j'ai dénoncé récemment certains partis d'extrême gauche, des postures de leaders d'appareils et compagnie. Pour moi un parti politique c'est un parti du peuple, un syndicat, c'est la même chose, à partir d'un moment tu te dis, un syndicat c'est dans une même boîte des salariés qui décident de former un groupe de pression pour faire valoir leurs droits, avec un porte-parole qui est élu, c'est ça un parti politique. Pour faire valoir nos droits on va élire un porte-parole et le porte-parole va nous défendre. [...] Donc cette idée de la politique à nous, on prend un porte-parole, on organise nos élections. Mais malheureusement, j'ai l'impression que c'est un peu l'inverse, que c'est eux qui organisent leurs élections, et on te dit voilà, ya lui, lui et lui qui se présentent... Et pour défendre tes droits... il te reste la rue. Alors que c'est pas ça qu'on imaginait, c'est pas ça la

democratie, c'est pas ça du tout. Normalement la personne que tu élis c'est lui qui défend tes droits, c'est tout bête quoi.

Ouais mais le système de représentation est en crise depuis super longtemps...

En réalité, quand je fais un concert pour un parti d'extrême gauche c'est pas pour les leaders du parti que je le fais, c'est pour les gens, pour les militants qui sont là. Tu les connais les militants, tu les as vus, tu connais les militants du PC, de Lutte Ouvrière tout ça, tu vois les militants comment ils sont, c'est des gens qui nous ressemblent, des gens de la rue, des ouvriers, je suis content d'être là, réellement. J'en ai rien à foutre d'Arlette ou d'Olivier Besancenot ou de Bové ou quoi tu vois. C'est des gens qui croient en quelque chose, qui s'accrochent à quelque chose. Nous quand on va faire un concert pour des militants on passe du temps à discuter avec les gens qui sont là qui militent. C'est ça qui nous plaît, au moins tu rencontres des gens tu vois. Et les porte-parole c'est juste des porte-parole de ces militants-là à la base. Moi ça me fait plaisir de les rencontrer, il y a un espace donc moi je le prends, pour aller jouer en face de gens qui comprennent, que t'as compris, moi ça me fait plaisir. C'est pour ça qu'on a fait la tournée des bons potes, on a été jouer partout où il y avait des gens... T'imagines t'es dans l'urgence, t'as des gosses, tu te fais traiter comme un chien par ton patron, t'arrives au boulot tous les matins avec la peur au ventre parce que t'attends d'être viré et tu distribues des tracts parce que t'y crois, putain mais chapeau. Je t'applaudis mais tous les jours quoi. Moi j'ai du respect. Et tu vois aller faire de la musique pour des gens comme ça, des gens qui se battent pour moi c'est important, réellement.

Quand tu parlais de « ils s'approprient les mots et tout ça, les mecs de droite »: là, ils sont dans les slogans. Et pour moi ce qu'il y a de pire encore c'est les postures de penseurs. Nan mais Sarkozy et tous les mecs de droite c'est des postures de penseurs, des postures philosophes, où ils arrivent avec des slogans, des citations, et les mecs c'est un truc d'intellectuels voilà. Et les mecs d'extrême gauche, même si je suis pas d'accord avec les mots ils ont une posture de gauche, ils ont une posture de militants. Machin quand il parle voilà on a l'impression que c'est des gens de terrain même si ce n'est pas le cas des fois, peu importe, ou c'est plus le cas parce qu'ils ont vieilli parce qu'ils se sont laissés embarquer par l'appareil politique et par des idéaux éloquentes, trotskystes ou marxistes qui sont un peu... tu vois... bref, et qui ne sont plus d'actualité dans les quartiers.

C'est pas ça mais c'est que du coup t'es un peu loin de la réalité: si tu veux, parfois, ils ne se rendent pas compte qu'ils sont noyés dans des trucs et finalement tu discutes en l'air quoi. Et ils parlent du mouvement ouvrier... mais il y a un malentendu: comment tu veux qu'une mère de famille elle s'identifie au mouvement ouvrier si elle est au chômage et tout. Ça a l'air con mais c'est vachement important, tu vois.

On est d'accord, il y a une urgence, même quand il s'agit des mouvements d'extrême gauche. Il y a peut être, pas un mépris, mais une incompétence de ce côté-là, d'avoir du mal à intégrer toutes les classes dominées de cette société. Moi j'en ai parlé à Besancenot et tout, j'ai dit « mais ils sont où les chômeurs, ils sont où les chibanis, les anciens combattants, ils sont où les indigènes, dis moi ». Il y a pas de ça dans les discours.

Enfin il y a un petit peu dans les discours mais dans la pratique pas trop.

C'est compliqué aussi à un moment de se dire que les ouvriers ils sont aussi dans des idées réacs, racistes parce que entre les mecs du FN et les mecs du PC il y a le silence. Moi j'ai trouvé que parfois Arlette Laguiller dans des débats difficiles elle a pas eu peur de froisser une éventuelle partie de son électorat qui pouvait être encore avec des valeurs racistes etc...

Mais c'est parce qu'elle essaye qu'elle sait qu'il n'y a plus rien à perdre aussi tu vois. C'est fini la vague Arlette...

Oui maintenant c'est la vague Besancenot...

➤ 8. *Oui mais c'est pas forcément les gens, c'est la dynamique qu'il y a derrière qui compte tu vois...*

Je suis pas systématiquement en méfiance. Là sur le coup je leur fais assez confiance sur le NPA, Besancenot. Je le trouve juste sur son analyse anti-capitaliste et sur les répercussions que ça peut avoir aujourd'hui en France sur le peuple, sur le vivre ensemble et tout. Je les trouve vachement juste quoi. Et pourquoi pas ? Si c'est bien fait avec pertinence, pourquoi pas ? Tu vois je l'entendais ce matin à la radio, je suis complètement d'accord, sur plein de choses. Franchement ça m'est arrivé deux trois fois de préparer des interviews, parce que tu fais une radio et qu'en face il y a un politicien et t'as plein d'auditeurs et tu te dis « ou tu passes pour un con ou tu t'en sors pas, finalement ». Donc ça m'est arrivé d'organiser mes idées avant une interview. Et franchement des fois c'était catastrophique. J'avais des notes et un argument. Je me rendais compte que j'avais pas dit un truc et je me suis dit il faut que je repasse à l'autre. Là c'est le bordel. Et si t'es interrompu, pour repartir tu te dis « où j'en étais dans mon argumentaire !! ». Alors je me suis dit franchement c'est vraiment pas mon métier, et je crois qu'il faut que je vienne sans stress quoi, sans complexes. Ya assez de gens complexés, des gens du peuple, les classes dominées. Parce qu'on est une société d'élitistes quand même en France, parce qu'il faut avoir lu Jaurès, Sartre, Montaigne et compagnie pour sortir des citations à la télé. Et quand il y a un artiste qui le fait comme Abd Al Malik tout le monde l'applaudit: mais quel talent, qu'est-ce qu'il parle bien ! On dit d'un mec qui passe à la télé aujourd'hui « qu'est-ce qu'il parle bien ». T'imagines le truc de fou « qu'est-ce qu'il parle bien » ! Qu'est-ce qu'on en a à foutre quoi, c'est ce qu'il a à dire qui importe ! On en est encore à « séduisants = convaincants » finalement. Putain qu'est-ce qu'il parle bien, un jeune qui passe à la télé, qu'est-ce qu'il parle bien hein. Les gens ils disent ça quoi. Parce qu'on est dans une société élitiste... Et pour moi alors tout ce que je peux imaginer c'est Djamel Comedy show ou être...

Le bouffon arabe de service ?

Quand t'as 16 ou 17 ans c'est trop tard parce que tout ça se décide à 9-10 ans. Ça réduit encore plus quoi... même le foot c'est mort...

En fait c'est une caricature ! Les deux trucs dans lesquels tu peux émerger: le foot ou le rap...

Ouais, c'est ça... oui ou maintenant humoriste aussi... Parce que le Djamel Comedy show c'est des Noirs et Arabes qui rigolent de leur condition. Ça te fait réfléchir quoi [...] en tout cas, moi j'aime bien, ça peut être très très cool... faut pas oublier que ça motive... Tu vois moi je pense que faut pas oublier ça... parce que moi je sais que demain on me reprochera d'être un polémiste, tu vois, on me le reproche déjà tu vois... de pas être suffisant...

De pas être assez radical, d'être trop unitaire ? Si t'essayes d'aller partout du coup... C'est sûr que...

Il s'agit pas d'aller partout, non, moi j'ouvre... Je dis: celui qui veut venir il vient, voilà point. Celui qui veut venir il vient, celui qui veut pas venir il vient pas, il s'agit pas d'aller partout. [...] Mais] c'est quoi avoir une posture politique aujourd'hui ? Moi j'suis désolé, j'suis un enfant de l'immigration, j'ai pas fait d'études, j'suis un enfant de milieu ouvrier, et voilà celui qui n'est pas content il va se faire foutre... j'ai toute ma lucidité tu vois. Moi j'suis pas dans le discours dominant, j'suis pas un mec qui a fait des études et qui fait des leçons, non on est juste des bonhommes de notre quartier... Donc aujourd'hui on peut ne pas aimer, mais on ne peut pas dire enfin, en quoi ça serait une manigance MAP, en quoi ça serait une supercherie ? Qu'on m'explique !

Vous en êtes pas encore tout à fait là mais vous pouviez y arriver ?

Tu vois... Mais ça arrive déjà ! On peut ne pas aimer mais ça va être compliqué de nous faire un procès... parce que nous on peut clair et net...

- 9. *Mais je sais pas imagine vous faites un concert à la Ligue, Bové, je sais pas... ya la star locale qui monte sur scène... Vous vous sentez pas utilisés ? C'est jamais arrivé ?*

C'est jamais arrivé. Jamais, non. [...] C est la différence... On juge un homme - enfin quand j'dis un homme ça peut être une femme aussi - à ses actes et le blable pour moi c'est de la trompette etc... Non j'suis désolé dans mes concerts auaujourd'hui on laisse la place aux gens qui ont des choses a dire, aux luttes etc, on laisse monter des gens sur scène pour faire des discours contre les prisons, pour la Palestine etc... mais des gens qui sont soi-disant nos détracteurs ou j'sais pas quoi qu'il sachent aussi qu'en deux ans je me suis tapé 50 concerts, partout en France, bénévoles etc, à emmener des pères de familles etc, sur scène qui sont pas payés et tout ca... Après la critique c'est super facile, surtout de la part de gens qui font rien, qui ont juste le temps de penser, de faire des études etc tu vois... Tu vois c'est l'un ou l'autre tu vois ? Après nous, après ya un autre truc, qui fait que je suis pas du tout complexé, c'est qu'on fait de la musique... Je ne suis pas du tout complexé par ça. On fait de la musique, c'est un moment qu'on partage quoi avec des gens... tu vois, sinon j'écritais des livres, j'suis pas un intello tu vois. Nous on fait de la musique, on est là pour se marrer, c'est du spectacle, on a un show... Voilà. Après j'suis désolé si t'as envie d'un concert qui est en même temps un argumentaire politique, bah ya la Rumeur quoi, tu peux aller les voir en concert...

T'as une perspective différente...

Evidemment, on est évidemment différent tu vois nous on a un spectacle...

C'est important ça aussi de faire un truc plus léger quoi, non ?

Mais si ! Le mot léger ne me fait pas peur, c'est pas un gros mot pour moi tu vois... Moi je fais partie d'une culture - et que ceux qui ont un problème avec ma culture de bougnoule me le disent - où quand on est pas bien on sort un darbouka et on fait la fête, tu vois, quand on va a des manifestations des sans papiers on va voir ce que c'est quoi... on se marre et on sort les darbouka et puis c est parti quoi, et ça c'est notre culture aussi... Et moi on m'a transmis ca aussi, et c'est important ça aussi et donc c'est ce que je fais sur scène. Tu vois je suis dans le truc des intellos a la francaise mais dans la transmission des parents... [...]

4. Dario Anatole from Stéréotypes / KMK

I interviewed Dario Anatole, a.k.a. Mista on two occasions (15th October 2007, 27th November 2010). The second interview, undertaken quite some time after the essential fieldwork, was done at an interesting time, when the band had been a bit off the manic live activity following the release of their albums. This endowed Mista with some distance with the overall experience, and a projection towards wider militant issues. Here are some excerpts of that interview:

➤ *1. Alors ce qui m'intéresse c'est comment toi tu vis ton identité en temps que minorité discriminée dans le contexte actuel, et comment tu as évolué sur ce plan?...*

Alors, c'est assez complexe parce que moi, je viens de la Guyane, donc ce qu'on peut appeler une colonie française. Mais par contre j'ai la nationalité évidemment de l'occupant si on parle en tant que colonie, donc c'est pas pareil. Quand on est en Guyane - j'y suis retourné il y a quelques années - on le vit pas du tout pareil. Par contre quand on est en métropole, vu que là évidemment on se retrouve dans le camp de la minorité à cause de la couleur, c'est un petit plus compliqué. On voit vite la discrimination, chose que l'on n'a pas (un petit plus!) sur sa terre natale, sur plein de différents plans: ça peut être le logement, l'emploi, sur plein de choses différentes. Et moi comment je le vis, alors il y a eu quand j'étais plus jeune je dirais, alors je devais être un petit peu plus remarquable de par mon comportement, donc j'avoue que j'étais plus souvent contrôlé, j'étais plus souvent arrêté que maintenant où bon j'ai un comportement qui est un petit plus passe-partout, j'évite évidemment d'avoir des esclandres de voix ou des gestuelles qui sont un petit peu... voilà !

Tu t'es censuré par rapport à ça ?

Bah en fait je crois que naturellement je me suis un petit peu censuré et puis avec l'âge aussi. Il y a dix ans j'étais pas le même que maintenant quoi, donc forcément je pense que je me suis un peu censuré parce qu'on s'adapte à son environnement et comme tu disais tout à l'heure, le contexte fait que quand t'es avec des collègues t'évites de gueuler dans le bus pour que tout le monde entende tes conversations, des choses que je calculais pas avant parce que c'est mon naturel, on a l'habitude de parler fort, de s'exprimer et voilà. Et quand tu t'aperçois que ça dérange les gens, qu'ils te regardent bizarre, que ça leur dit « ah mais regardez, ils sont pas comme nous » bah ouais petit à petit je crois que tu t'auto-censures et tu te dis bon ben comme ça pour éviter tout simplement après... bah ce que je te disais... de se faire arrêter, alors que t'as pas plus à te reprocher que quelqu'un d'autre.

Mais est-ce que ça a provoqué en toi par exemple une révolte ou tu t'es revendiqué d'une identité particulière ? Tu devais revendiquer une identité, ou bien toi tu l'as plutôt vécu en passant par l'égalité avec... tu vois ?

Alors du coup évidemment tu te sens, enfin on te fait sentir (c'est pas pareil hein!), tu sens que tu es différent, et on te le fait bien sentir dans des remarques, dans des positions je sais pas. Ça peut être quand t'arrives au restaurant ya des tables, tu vas être servi le dernier, on va te parler vite fait, alors que le client qui est arrivé après, qui a la cinquantaine, blanc caucasien, lui on va en prendre soin, on va lui apporter tous les égards auquel le client normalement il a droit. Et toi t'auras peut-être pas droit à tous ces égards justement parce que par le fait de ta couleur ou ton appartenance à une minorité. Et donc forcément tu le vis une fois, deux fois, trois fois et au bout d'un moment ça te gonfle, moi ça m'a gonflé. Or, j'avais la chance d'avoir une passion à côté qui est la musique et l'écriture donc j'ai pu m'exprimer, me défendre et lutter à travers la musique et l'écriture, ça a été mon moyen de pouvoir sortir tout ça et de pouvoir transformer ma colère en chose un petit peu plus positive que peut être si j'avais pas eu ce moyen de réflexion qui est l'écriture ou la musique, je serais parti sur d'autres voies qui auraient été moins pacifiques.

➤ 2. Et dans quelle mesure justement cette expérience a joué sur la manière dont tu te sens engagé maintenant politiquement, sur le plan citoyen...

Alors ce qu'il y a aussi c'est que le fait de te sentir différent justement tu te poses des questions sur ton identité et tu te dis: je suis censé être français, en tout cas par ma nationalité, mais j'ai pas la couleur dite française qui est blanc. Donc quelle est la définition justement de qu'est-ce qu'est un bon français, est-ce que ça va être un blanc ? Alors du coup vu qu'on me fait sentir que malgré ma nationalité, je fais pas partie de cette nation-là, de ce groupe-là. Mais tu sais pas quoi être alors puisque je n'ai aucune autre, c'est pas comme si j'étais originaire du Cameroun ou de je ne sais où ou d'un pays asiatique qui aurait pu dire même si j'ai la nationalité française en fait mes origines je me sentirais plus cambodgien ou plus autre chose, plus camerounais. Là non, je ne sais pas quoi me sentir d'autre à part français. Du coup tu te dis: bah ouais, je suis français mais pas comme les autres. Donc est-ce qu'il y a plusieurs catégories de Français, est-ce que justement il y a une catégorie qui est plus française ? Et on s'aperçoit en réfléchissant à tout ça que bah ouais il y a plusieurs catégories de Français. Et nos politiques nous le rappellent tous les jours quand par exemple on veut te déchoir de ta nationalité voilà, quelqu'un qui est français comment tu veux le déchoir de sa nationalité ? Il va être quoi ? Apatride ? Apatride ça n'existe pas dans ce monde là, normalement, on a tous des origines de quelque part. Alors forcément bah ouais, ça provoque tout ce qu'on a vu après en termes de révolte. Je disais, moi j'ai la musique, mais quand t'as pas eu ça, des fois ils se retrouvent dans les stades de foot à siffler la marseillaise tout simplement pour ça. Parce que tu as la nationalité, t'es né ici, tu as les mêmes codes, la même langue, mais juste pour des questions d'appartenance, d'origine sur des fois trois ou quatre générations passées, on te fait sentir que non, tu n'es pas le même. Alors ton comportement du coup il change. Pour certains la révolte c'est ça, la révolte elle va se traduire comme ça, par le rejet des codes de la nation, que ce soit la marseillaise, que ce soit par le langage: on nous dit « ouais il faut bien parler le français », alors qu'il y a des tonnes de Français qui parlent très mal cette langue alors qu'ils sont nés ici, qu'ils sont français-blancs-de-souche depuis des générations, et ils ont une grammaire qui fait vraiment pitié. Voilà, donc c'est toutes ces espèces de choses qu'on te fait ressentir où au bout d'un moment tu te dis « bah je sais pas trop en fait si je suis français, si je suis français d'origine, si je suis... ». Alors soit tu lâches l'affaire, moi ce que j'ai fait, en fait moi ce que je me sens, en fait je me sens humain avant tout quoi. Français après c'est parce que voilà c'est comme ça. Avant on disait citoyen du monde, même si ce terme-là est bien vague: ouais je me sens citoyen du monde, mais je me sens pas proche d'un Inuit alors que je me sens proche des Français. Alors c'est assez bizarre à définir, on est toujours dans une espèce de truc. Je pense que pour toutes les populations issues des minorités (alors on a les DOM TOMS comme la Martinique, la Réunion, la Guyane, où là la couleur en général dominante elle est noire), quand on est en métropole, on se sent aussi discriminés que les Africains qui eux n'ont pas la nationalité normalement, ou en ont une autre en tout cas. Et on se sent aussi discriminés qu'eux. Donc ça montre bien déjà qu'à l'intérieur-même de la société française il y a déjà des sous-catégories. Et après, quand tu es étranger à la société française, il y a encore, tu es encore en dessous de ces catégories-là.

C'est une position qui est compliquée justement par le fait que tu ne peux même pas revendiquer une identité étrangère quoi.
Exactement.

T'as même pas accès à ça, à une altérité.

Donc tu pourrais dire: bah fuck, puisque la France elle veut pas de moi, je vais aller ailleurs où on veut bien de moi, mais en gros t'as nulle part d'autre où aller puisque toutes tes origines et tes racines elles sont quasiment là quoi. Donc c'est vrai que c'est très complexe en termes

d'identité pour pouvoir se positionner ou se reconnaître. Alors après, même sur le terme de minorité c'est une question de nombre, enfin de nombre ici. Mais moi je me sens pas appartenant à une minorité. J'ai pas l'impression que je fais parti d'un groupe, à part quand je subis la discrimination évidemment, mais sinon, au quotidien... C'est ce qu'on te renvoie en fait, sinon tu n'as pas ce truc-là qui naît en toi naturellement. Non je crois que tous les êtres humains recherchent à peu près les mêmes choses, donc après voilà, c'est les petites différences qui font nos particularités, mais on ne te le fait pas sentir naturellement, ça vient pas naturellement de te sentir différent.

➤ 3. Et c'est cette contradiction qui doit être compliquée pour se construire... Est-ce que c'est ça qui a été le moteur de ton engagement après?

Le moteur de mon engagement je crois qu'il vient de là parce qu'en gros, on a tous envie d'appartenir à un groupe. C'est rare les gens qui ont envie d'être seuls et d'appartenir à rien, pas avoir d'amis, de collègues. Et donc mon engagement il est venu du fait que souvent évidemment je trainais avec d'autres minorités ethniques - et encore ça a évolué, ça a changé - et quand j'étais avec un Arabe et que je me baladais, il m'arrivait plus souvent de me faire contrôler que quand j'étais avec un Blanc. Ou quand je suis avec un Blanc et qu'il a l'air bon plutôt... voilà quoi, je sais que ça passe mieux pour certains trucs. Le truc à faire aussi c'est de le laisser parler, j'ai plus de chances de pouvoir obtenir des choses. Je dis ça parce que dans mon parcours, c'était marrant parce que nous on avait la particularité, nous on était trois à avoir construit un petit peu un truc, une espèce de collectif d'artistes, et il y avait un Arabe, donc moi et un Blanc. Et on s'apercevait que si c'était moi ou l'Arabe qui parlait on était moins écoutés, moins pris au sérieux, et si c'était le Blanc, pourtant qui disait exactement la même chose, là c'était pris plus au sérieux, là c'était mieux compris, alors que c'était les mêmes mots qui étaient utilisés mais ils sortaient juste pas de la même bouche. Donc ce genre de choses m'a donné envie et soif de plus d'égalité. Donc après quand tu te dis mais comment obtenir ça, c'est passé par la musique, mais la musique en gros tu l'as une fois sur une chanson, tu l'enregistres, tu la chantes dans les concerts, les soirées, les gens ils sont contents, certains ça leur apporte une petite réflexion mais en fait ça change pas le monde la musique, on le sait bien quoi. Il y a pas beaucoup de musiciens ou d'albums qui ont changé la face du monde, qui ont emmené une révolution culturelle, pas culturelle...

Si tu fais ça toute seule la musique...

Oui la musique toute seule, la musique en elle-même, une chanson en elle-même elle change pas le monde. Par contre des actions de militantisme ont changé le monde, ont apporté plus de choses. Ce qu'a fait Martin Luther King, et des actions comme ça, ça a apporté de vrais accomplissements pour l'humanité. Et donc c'est cette envie, de me dire c'est pas assez concret de faire de la musique et pouvoir dire, voilà je veux que les choses elles changent, il manquait quelque chose. Et donc j'ai commencé l'engagement par rajouter justement en plus de la musique des espèces de compléments d'information pour que les gens ils prennent conscience justement des luttes sur lesquelles on attirait leur attention.

Quelles luttes par exemple ?

Alors ça a été par exemple, le code de déontologie de la police mis sur un single que j'avais sorti sur le thème justement des contrôles au faciès, ce genre de choses-là. C'était une espèce de complément qui faisait que je sentais que là justement il y avait un petit peu plus de profondeur que juste la chanson. En plus de la chanson qui disait quelque chose, ou qui relatait des faits, il y avait derrière des articles de lois qui disaient: regardez normalement [la police] doit se comporter comme ça et on s'aperçoit qu'évidemment ça ne se passe pas comme ça, donc on a de quoi s'appuyer juridiquement et on peut se retourner envers des avocats, ou la justice. Voilà, même si on y croit pas trop mais c'est quand même des moyens et des outils mis à notre disposition si on les connaît, il y a des associations qui

ont des juristes avec eux et tout ça. Parce que le pire dans tout ça c'est que la plupart des [cas de discrimination sont jugés] rarement de suite, sauf quand ça c'est fait sous l'œil de caméras, où il y a des relais médiatiques importants, sinon, et bien même quand c'est comme ça, ça reste souvent impuni. Un ministre, comme Brice Hortefeux, qui a dit des propos racistes, il reste toujours en place, il y a pleins de gens comme ça qui tiennent des propos ahurissants sur les chaînes publiques, des chaînes de télévision ou des radios et c'est des audiences pas possibles, c'est censé être des leaders d'opinion ce genre de mecs, mais ils n'ont que des propos qui sont régressifs quoi. Et donc l'engagement, il vient presque naturellement comme aussi de l'auto-défense: et dire, bah voilà j'ai pris une gifle une fois, j'en ai pris une deuxième, je vais pas en prendre une troisième, je vais trouver les moyens d'esquiver ou de faire qu'il n'y ait plus ton bras qui parte vers ma joue. Et donc le CD et le petit livret ça a été un des moyens, et puis après comme je te disais je trouvais que chez la plupart des gens c'était bien relayé et bien j'ai continué dans cette voie-là. Et là j'ai été carrément demander à des gens d'apporter des témoignages de discrimination: c'est une manière aussi je crois de pas se faire bouffer, de pouvoir parler, de façon artistique ou pas. Donc j'ai monté un projet qui s'appelle Anti-DiscriminAction par la suite, ramener des artistes et des musiciens qui ont tous traité du thème de la discrimination, on a recueilli des paroles, des poèmes, des textes, tout ça, avec comme je disais tout à l'heure des infos pour pouvoir relayer ou être assisté dans des journaux militants.

C'est là que t'as commencé à approcher des associations qui militaient plus sur le plan politique...

Tout à fait, c'est à la suite justement de vouloir apporter le supplément d'information aux gens qui étaient discriminés que je me suis fait un réseau de gens qui militaient sur ce créneau-là. Notamment Takticollectif ici à Toulouse mais il y a également quelques institutions qui sont sur ce domaine. Alors c'est très compliqué avec les institutions parce qu'on sait que s'ils sont dessus c'est parce que électoralement ça peut leur apporter des choses et c'est jamais complètement désintéressé, ils se battent jamais finalement pour la finalité de la lutte en elle-même, parce que s'il y avait une véritable volonté de lutter politiquement contre le racisme ça se saurait depuis longtemps. Quand on veut vraiment lutter contre quelque chose et que politiquement on met les moyens généralement on arrive à ses fins. Donc là effectivement, il n'y a pas vraiment de volonté politique sur ce plan-là, on sait que ce ne sont que des crédits électoraux qui prennent. Mais en attendant ils ont souvent les cordons de la bourse et ils nous permettent de pouvoir monter des projets, des manifestations et des choses comme ça. Après si on peut pas c'est pas grave, on trouve d'autres moyens d'auto-financement alternatifs pour pouvoir aboutir mais ça reste très très compliqué surtout dans ce genre de luttes, qui ne sont pas je dirais des luttes un peu officielles. Enfin, le racisme est devenu une espèce de lutte officielle maintenant, c'est toujours bien de se déclarer anti-raciste, il y a SOS Racisme dans le Parti Socialiste notamment, mais par contre si on va plus profondément, sur par exemple la lutte pour la Palestine, pour la libération de ce pays et l'émancipation de ce peuple, bah là on s'aperçoit que de suite ça va être plus compliqué, ça va être plus délicat comme lutte. Tout simplement parce qu'il y a derrière des questions politiques sensibles à cause de l'anti-sémitisme etc... . De toutes façons dès qu'on commence à toucher à Israël tout ça en politique on commence à marcher sur des œufs tout de suite. Donc voilà, là aussi c'est des choses qui ne sont pas très exposées, qui n'ont pas trop de visibilité toutes ces luttes-là, donc c'est bien quand on arrive à y mettre un côté artistique derrière qui permet d'attirer des gens sur une chanson, sur un joli poème, sur un film.

➤ *4. Et pour toi c'est plus une question sociale ou une question culturelle ?*

Je crois qu'il y a un petit peu de tout dans la lutte. Il y a d'abord ce que je te disais une soif de justice, et la justice c'est aussi une question sociale. La justice sociale c'est une question primordiale, on peut pas

prétendre dire qu'on vit dans un monde juste quand il y a des catégories qui sont écrasées. On est dans une société où il y a plusieurs trucs, ya les dominés et les dominants. Quand on fait partie de la catégorie des dominants, on a pas la même position que quand on est dans la catégorie des dominés, et la justice n'est pas tout à fait la même. [...] Quand tu as les moyens économiques de pouvoir réaliser des choses, et bien tu n'as pas les mêmes problématiques que quand tu n'as pas ces moyens-là. Donc forcément là, il y a évidemment une grosse question à traiter. Et puis on est dans un système où les écarts sont de plus en plus grands entre les détenteurs et ceux qui n'ont rien donc voilà quoi. Il y a quelque chose de pas normal dans la question sociale de toutes façons. On est obligés de le voir sous une espèce de... je dirais de *lutte des classes* même quasiment, chose dont on parle très très peu maintenant. On a l'impression que... enfin les gens luttent à l'intérieur-même pour leur propre sort et pour leur propre classe, mais on leur fait croire que le combat et le problème il est pas vraiment là, que c'est pas parce qu'il y a plusieurs catégories de classes que le combat... En fait on nous fait croire que le combat il est pas là. Mais je pense que le combat il est aussi dans ça, dans la lutte des classes.

Alors le combat il est où, c'est quoi ? C'est une question d'identité, de religion ?

Bah voilà, souvent on ramène ça à des questions comment dire, on ramène ça à la question du racisme ou quelque chose comme ça. Or on s'aperçoit très bien que sur le racisme dès que tu as les moyens les gens ils oublient vite la couleur, tu obtiens ce qu'il te faut. L'argent là, il a pas de couleur, le racisme il va passer en arrière plan et les gens ils vont oublier. Il n'apparaît justement que sur certaines catégories. Tous les émirats arabes qui ont le pétrole ils sont pas victimes du racisme dont sont victimes les Maghrébins qui n'ont que le sable du désert. Voilà, donc forcément il n'y a pas que la question de l'appartenance ethnique ou religieuse. Je crois que le vrai problème en gros il est pas là. Le vrai problème il est vraiment dans cette espèce de justice sociale où économiquement tout le monde devrait et pourrait avoir de quoi subsister et être, avoir une société un peu plus égalitaire.

- *5. Mais le problème c'est qu'en France on tient ces deux discours, c'est-à-dire que d'un côté il y a une sorte de culturalisation pour faire disparaître le rapport de classe, mais de l'autre on nous dit aussi - si tu prends les luttes traditionnelles, syndicales ou des partis politiques: on voit pas ; le racisme c'est accessoire un petit peu... un truc à part, à côté, une annexe, alors que c'est quand même une forme de domination qui est spécifique, qui se manifeste différemment.*

Tout à fait, mais en fait cette question de racisme elle n'est là que pour servir une idéologie qui derrière est uniquement pour une domination économique. En gros c'est ça. Le schéma, il est tout simple. Pourquoi il y a eu le colonialisme et l'esclavagisme et tout ça ? Tout simplement pour des questions économiques. C'était pas parce qu'au départ les mecs ils pensaient que lui il était un peu moins homme que lui, et donc on allait pouvoir les asservir etc...

Elle justifie...

Exactement, c'était juste pour justifier une domination économique c'est tout, et plus une exploitation pour pouvoir atteindre une domination. En gros tous ces mecs qui réfléchissent sur ces idéologies le savent très bien, alors il y a toujours quelques cons qui sont dans leurs trucs, mais la plupart savent très bien que tous les hommes - d'ailleurs la Déclaration Universelle des Droits de l'Homme le dit bien je crois - sont tous libres et égaux, dans les mots, en théorie. Mais après [en pratique] on sait que c'est différent. Mais voilà, ces gens qui mettent ces idéologies en place c'est uniquement pour ça à la base. Donc lutter uniquement contre le racisme, je sais pas si on ne se trompe pas en gros de véritable bataille. C'est comme quand les gens ils s'attaquent véritablement, ils veulent s'attaquer au problème et ils pensent que les politiques vont pouvoir les sauver, alors qu'en fait les politiques ne

sont que les instruments. La véritable révolution, elle arrivera le jour où on arrivera à cramer les banques, les banquiers. C'est-à-dire vraiment tout ceux qui ont, qui tiennent les cordons de la bourse parce que le nerf de la guerre il est là en fait. C'est uniquement une question économique, et de sous, tout tourne autour de ça et après on y met des idéologies, on y met des systèmes, on y place des choses pour pouvoir contrôler, dominer et rester à la tête de ça. Mais le vrai combat à mener pour tout militant qui a soif de justice je crois qu'il est là, sur les gens qui tiennent vraiment les cordons de la bourse, qui ont Wall Street, toutes les bourses, le marché mondial, tout ça. Et qui est supporté par l'idée de l'idéologie capitaliste et tout le système, on te parle de marché, on le moralise etc... Mais voilà, tu moralise pas un truc qui est inégalitaire dans son essence-même à la base quoi. Le capitalisme il est fait pour que seuls ceux qui en ont les moyens puissent s'en sortir, on te fait croire que si t'as pas les moyens tu peux t'en sortir. Y'en a un sur je sais pas combien qui va y arriver. Donc voilà. Donc pour les nouvelles générations, et bien, un petit peu de lutte c'est bien, mais il faut s'attaquer je pense au vrai fondement du truc. Le racisme est une très bonne cause et j'étais le premier à me jeter dessus, à fonder Anti-DiscriminAction donc je vais pas jeter la pierre ou cracher dans la soupe. Mais justement, après avoir fait cette action je me disais ouais ça fait un an et demi que je réfléchissais là-dessus, mais est-ce qu'il est là le vrai combat ? Est-ce que c'est vraiment ça au bout du compte ? Parce que je pense pas que si au bout du compte tu me vois comme un être humain, je te vois comme un être humain, est-ce que ça va changer beaucoup de choses dans les rapports sociaux existants ? Je ne suis pas sûr. Parce qu'il existe des Blancs qui sont discriminés, qui n'ont pas de quoi manger, qui voilà, pareil qu'il existe des Noirs, des Arabes, des Chinois dans toute sorte de phénotypes, voilà, ça existe ça. Alors je crois que la vraie bataille elle est vraiment... alors là, la déconstruction des idéologies racistes et tout ça, ça fait partie de cette bataille, mais de batailles à gagner. Mais je crois que pour gagner la guerre vraiment: on doit s'attaquer au système financier.

- 6. Et donc toi tu vois pas l'intérêt, par exemple, à organiser des paroles politiques autonomes sur la question, une parole politique, pas simplement une action culturelle, sur la question de l'identité minoritaire, comme par exemple, les Indigènes de la République.

Bah si, parce que tout ça comme je te dis ce sont des batailles qu'il faut mener pour pouvoir gagner cette guerre. Mais ce ne sont pas les finalités si tu veux. Si l'action ou le but des Indigènes de la République je pense est atteint, voilà les gens ils seront mieux ensemble, il y aura moins de propos racistes qui partiront, on se regardera pareil. Mais le système capitaliste en lui-même il dit pas c'est parce que tu es noir que tu vas avoir un peu moins d'argent, un peu moins de chances et un peu moins d'opportunités. Il dit pas ça. Et pourtant la réalité elle est là. Donc ça veut dire qu'il faut trouver un mode de fonctionnement sociétal qui nous permette non seulement de ne plus voir ces barrières raciales, ethniques, religieuses, mais en plus de ne plus avoir ces freins économiques pour certaines catégories. [...] Je crois que voilà, ça résume bien ma position, quand on parle de militantisme, la position militante. Pour dire qu'en gros maintenant, je suis un peu moins impliqué dans toutes les batailles. Je suis en train de chercher le moyen d'aller directement pour pouvoir essayer de gagner la guerre. Même si logiquement il faut passer par toutes les batailles pour pouvoir gagner une guerre... Des fois en essayant de perdre un peu moins de temps sur certaines choses que d'autres... J'essaie de trouver toujours...

...la matrice ?

Voilà, la matrice, où est le centre névralgique défracteur de tout ça.

5. Salah Amokrane from Tactikollectif

Salah Amokrane is a central and founding figure of the Tactikollectif, an ex-elected local representative of the political initiative Motivé-e-s, and the president of the Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires. I interviewed him in Toulouse on 25th November 2010, during the 7th edition of the annual festival *Origines Contrôlées*. Here are some excerpts of the interview:

- 1. *Le festival Origines Contrôlées propose trois axes thématiques: mémoire, discriminations, égalité des droits. Pourquoi ces trois thématiques ?*

Le temps du festival, même si ça dure une semaine, reste ponctuel. Mais un festival ça sert à mobiliser, à adresser des signes sur les sujets qui peuvent paraître importants. Ces deux dernières années, nous avons effectué un travail sur l'histoire de l'immigration, qui s'est beaucoup manifesté par la dimension artistique, en particulier la tournée du projet musical *Origines Contrôlées* mené par Mouss et Hakim. Le festival rassemble les points forts en un moment de rencontre. En ce qui concerne l'égalité des droits, un gros travail de mise en réseau - investissement dans le FSQP, etc, a été mené par le Tactikollectif. Enfin, sur la mémoire, nous nous sommes fait les relais de la mémoire des luttes espagnole (2008), tsigane (2010): ça a toujours été comme ça. Le festival a un peu de surface médiatique, est inscrit dans le paysage. Donc pour des gens qui sont sur d'autres sujets (mémoire tsigane, par exemple), *Origines Contrôlées* constitue une plate-forme: on a besoin de votre espace car on est pas des acteurs ou des opérateurs culturels. En réalité, Tactikollectif fait la mise en réseau si le sujet nous semble légitime ou si on y est sensible ; en plus on apprend beaucoup de choses. Et c'est vrai que ça serait caricatural de penser qu'on travaille que sur les questions qui sont liées aux immigrations postcoloniales. Après le Tactikollectif est une petite association, donc on peut pas tout faire, on doit donc avoir des priorités, orientations générales, puis on part de qui on est... mais ensuite beaucoup de choses se font dans la rencontre.

- 2. *En ce qui concerne le contexte général pour cette année: quelle est la tonalité générale, trouves-tu le contexte politique et social particulièrement hostile ?*

Oui, c'est sûr qu'on a quand même une radicalisation du discours de la droite aujourd'hui sur les questions identitaires en général, c'est une évidence: une radicalisation d'une partie de la droite, et un glissement d'une partie de la gauche aussi. Le sentiment général, c'est que si on est trop sensible au discours médiatique et politique, ça peut s'apparenter à du harcèlement moral. Après ce qui impacte le plus le travail de programmation et les sujets qu'on a envie de traiter à l'intérieur du festival c'est plutôt lié à des questions plus contemporaines. Par exemple s'il y a une tonalité générale cette année, qui était déjà un peu présent l'an dernier mais apparaît plus cette année, c'est dans ce questionnement sur les alternatives, sur les chemins à prendre pour construire une réponse politique qui puisse réellement prendre en compte tous les sujets qu'on traite. Par exemple, les Indivisibles, ou associations culturelles toulousaines qui travaillent dans les quartiers. Le festival est un moment pour échapper aux contraintes d'une logique trop ponctuelle, moment sur lequel on va pouvoir rebondir et aller plus loin.

Tu veux dire que le festival peut constituer un espace temporaire militant, voire politique ?

C'est une agora quoi. Il y a aussi la notion d'éducation populaire, c'est ça quoi l'idée: écouter l'historien, échanger à partir d'une intervention

ou des gens qui sont dans la salle. Et puis c'est devenu un petit marqueur pour les gens à Toulouse et ailleurs.

➤ 3. *La question des Chibani-a-s est très présente cette année...*

Le problème n'est pas nouveau, c'est une question sur laquelle on travaille depuis pas mal d'années. Il y avait déjà eu un appel en 2007 des copains de Lyon (de El-Ghorba, et de la campagne Justice et Dignité pour les Chibani-a-s). Mais en ce moment et surtout à Toulouse, la question est particulièrement d'actualité. En 2006, une rencontre avait été consacrée à la question des vieux car si on parle de mémoire de l'immigration ce sont aussi les témoins, sujets et acteurs de cette histoire. Cette question a aussi occasionné des rencontres avec sociologues, travailleurs sociaux, etc. L'an dernier, la Case de Santé, le Cirrvi, d'autres associations se sont rassemblées, le comme le Tactikollectif poursuit sa logique de mise en réseau tout au cours de l'année, là, on pouvait profiter du moment du festival pour visibiliser qu'il existe un collectif, en fait un moment de lancement de la campagne. Cela permet de donner une visibilité à certaines choses qui sont moins dans la lumière d'habitude.

➤ 4. *Pourquoi ce calendrier et choix du lieu (Bourse du Travail) ?*

Novembre car moins de compétition avec autres événements mais pour se situer encore dans la rentrée, mais en se donnant le temps de préparation (donc pas Septembre). Et en ce qui concerne le lieu: on a essayé plusieurs formules, celle du festival itinérant, mais on s'est vite rendu compte que c'était plus intéressant d'avoir un lieu unique, même si on a fait des ouvertures, avant-premières ou clôtures de festival ailleurs (Halle aux Grains, TNT, etc). Symboliquement, c'est important d'être en centre ville aussi, pour recentraliser des questions marginalisées. Enfin avec la Bourse du Travail on est dans une bonne tradition: c'est bien d'être dans une Maison des Syndicats. Et puis les techniciens ont bien aménagé la salle pour en faire un joli lieu.

➤ 5. *Le festival est-il un des outils qu'on met à disposition pour agir dans le contexte actuel ?*

C'est une démarche d'éducation populaire, je trouve pas de meilleur mot, car l'éducation populaire c'est en même temps proposer une autre diffusion des savoirs, proposer un échange d'expériences, proposer différentes manières de s'exprimer, différents types d'expression politique (enfin, il y a différentes manières de le faire): le festival est un de ces moments. On a toujours pensé qu'un événement, que la dimension événementielle est une dimension intéressante, pas seulement sur le fait que ça communique mais parce que c'est un petit édifice à construire, ça permet vraiment de se mettre en action, et pour beaucoup de gens, il y a un horizon à moyen terme, il y a des objectifs, et il y a des places pour tout le monde, ça ouvre des places. C'est comme dans une revue, ou si on fait de la politique traditionnelle un peu, c'est pareil. L'idée c'est de créer des places, créer de la place pour tous: permet à des gens de trouver une place, de s'investir. Par exemple les 15-20 bénévoles qui sont là toutes la semaine: il y a des gens qui sont là pour passer un moment, d'autres pour filer un coup de main...

Oui, mais la plateforme Origines Contrôlées et la démarche du Tactikollectif semble avoir assez unique en ce qui concerne sa portée, son réseau... ainsi que la diversité et précision des sujets abordés... A telle échelle, ça me paraît assez unique.

Notre objectif c'est pas d'être unique...

➤ 6. *C'est vrai qu'on ressent la dimension militante du festival, et puis tout un travail de mémoire et de reconnaissance...*

Ce qui donne ce sentiment-là c'est peut-être une certaine permanence dans le parcours, une certaine stabilité dans le temps, l'ancrage. Sans concéder sur la radicalité, c'est aussi quand même être ouvert aux autres. C'est aussi à certains moments se faire plaisir, se préserver: c'est-à-dire nous on partage pas l'idée que militer c'est se sacrifier. Ce qu'il faut c'est un minimum de reconnaissance: par exemple les camarades du MIB nous ont apporté beaucoup, beaucoup, beaucoup, et sont à titre personnel parfois un peu oubliés. Je pense que la reconnaissance c'est important: quand on cite comme ça des militants qui ont beaucoup donné, ce qui est dur c'est tellement que la réussite sociale soit pas complètement au rendez-vous - même si arrivé à un certain âge de sa vie, c'est bien si on a un peu de quoi vivre et qu'on peut un peu se poser. Après ce qui est dur c'est le manque de reconnaissance. Et puis faut faire du retour, parce que ce qui est dur aussi souvent dans des organisations, dans des mouvements politiques ou associatifs, plus traditionnels, c'est qu'il y a pas de retour vers des gens... Moi je pense qu'il faut avoir de la reconnaissance quoi. C'est vrai que c'est un peu dur de croire en des gens qui cueillent les fruits de ceux que les autres ont labouré sans reconnaître ceux qui ont labouré le terrain. Et nous au Tactikollectif, même si par ailleurs c'est des amis, même si on est pas d'accord sur tout, on est ensemble, et en tout cas on n'oublie pas le boulot que eux ils ont fait. C'est pas juste une reconnaissance morale c'est juste que c'est ça le travail sur l'histoire et la mémoire, sinon si on fait pas ça, tu te retrouves et t'ouvres des journaux ou des revues comme ça qui un jour écrivent que c'est SOS Racisme qui a organisé les marches et que c'est la Cimade qui a mené le combat contre la double peine. Et ça c'est un déni violent, une amnésie mais c'est pas une question de jugement moral, ça a des conséquences sur ce qui se passe aujourd'hui: ne pas faire le travail en connaissance de cause de ce qui s'est passé avant et de qui c'est qui a...

Une amnésie cultivée à ton avis?

Il y a aussi beaucoup de gens qui ont intérêt à laisser à penser que... il y a des questions politiques elles sont présentes aujourd'hui parce que... Si la question des quartiers elle devient une question dont on s'empare, il y a plein de gens même à gauche qui auront plutôt intérêt à laisser à penser que c'est eux qui ont...

Quand parler au nom des autres devient parler à la place des autres

Aujourd'hui, tu vas à l'extrême-gauche, tu vas voir les violences policières machin, mais comment on s'est emparé de ces sujets-là ?

➤ 7. *Alors c'est à ce titre que l'associatif est un bon vecteur: l'expression culturelle constitue le moyen de s'emparer de la question des quartiers ?*

C'est pour ça qu'aussi dans notre cas le fait de travailler sur une dimension culturelle, ça permet aussi de travailler dans la durée et de maîtriser des sujets parfois sur lesquels les militants politiques plus traditionnels auront moins de prise, c'est un bon moyen par rapport à un objectif d'autonomie.

Appendix 7. Audio extracts

Track list for the MP3 audio files contained in the attached USB memory stick device.

Jolie Môme folder

From *Jolie Môme* (1998):

1. 'La semaine sanglante'
2. 'Marcos'

From *Rouge Horizon* (1999):

3. 'Exiger un toit'

From *Légitime Colère* (2003):

4. 'Macdo macstrike'
5. 'A les barricadas'

From *Basta Ya* (2007):

6. 'Le mouton noir'
7. 'Ya basta'
8. 'Sans la nommer'

Keny Arkana folder

From *L'esquisse* (2005):

1. 'Le missile est lancé'

From *Entre Ciment et Belle Etoile* (2006):

2. 'Le missile suit sa lancée'
3. 'La rage'
4. 'Nettoyage au karcher'
5. 'Jeunesse du monde'
6. 'Ils ont peur de la liberté'

From *Désobéissance* (2008):

7. 'Désobéissance civile'
8. 'Cinquième soleil'

La Rumeur folder

From *L'ombre sur la mesure* (2002):

1. 'L'ombre sur la mesure'
2. 'Premier matin de Novembre'

From *Regain de Tension* (2004):

3. 'A nous le bruit',
4. 'Maître mot, mots du maître'
5. 'Nous sommes les premiers sur...'

From *Du cœur à l'outrage* (2007):

6. 'La meilleure des polices'
7. 'Qui ça étonne encore ?'
8. 'Je suis une bande ethnique à moi tout seul'

MAP folder

From *Debout Là-D'dans!* (2006):

1. 'Balle populaire'
2. 'Lillo'
3. 'Donnez-nous'

From "*Featuring*" with *Axiom* (2006):

4. 'Des youyous dans ma mairie'

From *Grain d'Sel* (2007):

5. 'Dégage!'

From *Les bronzés font du ch'ti* (2009):

6. 'Appelle moi camarade' feat Keny Arkana
7. 'Les bronzés font du ch'ti'
8. 'La chasse est ouverte'
9. 'Salutations révolutionnaires' feat Mouss & Hakim

Moleque de Rua folder

From *Street Kids of Brazil* (1995):

1. 'Pregoes do rio'
2. 'Rap do Moleque'

From *Final Feliz* (2004):

3. 'Pimenta malagueta'
4. 'Favela do Moleque'

From *Utopia Agora* (2007):

5. 'Pagode japonês'
6. 'Toma'
7. 'Samba de panela'
8. 'Forró do pescador'

Mouss & Hakim folder

From *Mouss et Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées* (2007):

1. 'Adieu la France'
2. 'Telt-iyam'
3. 'Maison blanche'
4. 'La carte de résidence'
5. 'Chehilet laâyani'
6. 'Intas ma dyas'
7. 'Anfass'

From *Vingt d'Honneur* (2010):

8. 'Awah'

OPA folder

From *Live Alone à l'Inca* (2007):

1. 'De l'anarchie sociale de l'art'
2. 'La police veille au grain'
3. 'J'ai gribouillé'
4. 'La semaine sanglante'

From *Live au Z'Ubu* (2008):

5. 'Le mur des lamentations'

From *Live Studio Barbey* (2008):

6. 'Le bateau ivre'

From *Live au Bikini* (2011):

7. 'Il faut redevenir humain'

From *Live Hell Boqueron* (2011):

8. 'La beauté de la vie'

Stéréotypes folder

From *Six pieds sur terre* (2007):

1. 'Dents de la rue'
2. 'Sans artifice'
3. 'C'est de là que tout part'
4. 'Seul le taf paie'
5. 'Jolie colonie'

From *Mista Rebel Lion, Contrôle Surprise* (2007):

6. 'Contrôle surprise'
7. 'Le pouvoir à tout prix'
8. 'Démocratie zombie'

Tarace Boulba folder

From *A la demande générale* (1995):

1. 'Man in the street'

From *Une fois encore* (2000):

2. 'Camel (marching)'
3. 'Désarmez'
4. 'Vide ta tête'

From *Merci pour le tiep* (2006):

5. 'Merci pour le tiep'
6. 'Education'
7. 'New Orleans Express'
8. 'Zacharia'

Voukoum folder

From *On Larel On Lespri* (1996):

1. 'Kominikasyon'
2. 'Kolon-la'
3. 'Edikasyon'
4. 'Gwo siwo – mas lari'

From *An Lari-la/ Trans-la* (1999):

5. 'An lari-la'
6. 'Trans-la'

From *Lokans E Repriz* (1999):

7. 'Chawlot'
8. 'Say vlé vwè nou'

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Electronic resources

1. Electronic resources used for artists selected as case studies, and related associative or social networks

Appel aux Sans Voix – network’s mission statement: <http://www.appelauxsansvoix.org/>
[accessed 11/12/2008]

Axiom’s song feat. MAP ‘Des youyous dans ma mairie’:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kjgbt_0Ex90 [accessed 27/10/2011]

C.L.A.P 33 – collectif bordelais Contre Les Abus Policiers: <http://clap33.over-blog.com/>
[accessed 16/02/2012]

Créer C Résister: <http://www.creerresister.org/Accueil.html> [accessed 02/06/2010]

Jolie Môme: <http://www.cie-joliemome.org> [accessed 03/04/2010]

Jolie Môme – video clip for ‘Le mouton noir’:
<http://www.cie-joliemome.org/spip.php?article84> [accessed 15/10/2011]

Jolie Môme – song ‘Macdo Macstrike’: <http://www.cie-joliemome.org/spip.php?article82>
[accessed 15/10/2011]

Jolie Môme – press release of the trial’s verdict at:
<http://www.cie-joliemome.org/spip.php?article496> [accessed 15/10/2011]

Keny Arkana: <http://www.keny-arkana.com> [accessed 04/09/2011]

Keny Arkana – biography: <http://www.keny-arkana.com/divers/bio1.php>
[accessed 09/09/2008]

Keny Arkana – documentary film *Un autre monde est possible*:

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xx9g7_un-autre-monde-est-possible_news

[accessed 22/03/2007]

Keny Arkana – diversion by FN Internet activist video of her songs:

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1utv1_keny-arkana-utilise-par-le-fn_creation

[accessed 06/10/2008]

Keny Arkana – reaction to FN diversion of her video:

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1s84t_keny-arkana-le-front-de-la-haine_music

[accessed 06/10/2008]

Keny Arkana – interview in Nouvelle Vague:

http://www.nouvelle-vague.com/zoom.php?source=recherche&zoom_id=317

[accessed 06/10/2008]

Keny Arkana – interview in Nuesblog: <http://www.nuesblog.com/> [accessed 06/09/2008]

Keny Arkana – street performance in Geneva, video 1:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp6XsECySd8&feature=related> [accessed 16/11/2008]

Keny Arkana – street performance in Geneva, video 2:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzLscDzxNUc&feature=related> [accessed 16/11/2008]

Keny Arkana – street performance in protest against detention centres, video 1:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oP8_P8X0bLc&feature=related [accessed 06/09/2008]

Keny Arkana – street performance in protest against detention centres, video 2:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1l6ilz5p0c&feature=related> [accessed 06/09/2008]

KMK associative network: <http://kmkprod.free.fr/> [accessed 18/12/2011]

La Rage du Peuple, radical alter-globalist movement: <http://www.laragedupeuple.org/>

[accessed 04/09/2007]

La Rumeur: www.la-rumeur.com/index.html [accessed 05/05/2010]

Les Gamins de la Rue: <http://www.creerresister.org/Accueil.html> [accessed 03/03/2010]

Les Gamins de la Rue – former website, pre-2006 (archive): <http://art.rue.free.fr/>
[accessed 05/12/2009]

MAP (Ministère des Affaires Populaires): <http://www.map-site.fr/> [accessed 05/09/2009]

MAP – interactive performance on ‘Dégage!’:
http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1q9nv_map-degage_music [accessed 14/10/2009]

MAP – live performance of ‘Lillo’ at the festival *Les Francopholies de la Rochelle* in July 2007 available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxFNAMbD_Yg
[accessed 24/11/2011]

Moleque de Rua: <http://www.myspace.com/molequederua> [accessed 17/12/2011]

Mouss & Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées: <http://originescontrolees.blogpost.com/>
[accessed 31/10/2010]

Mouss & Hakim – live performance at the *Nouveau Casino*, in Paris:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWceAqRilW8&p=58AD8DA306D03C9F&playnext=1&index=21> [accessed 11/10/2009]

OPA: <http://www.opa33.org/> [accessed 26/12/2011]

OPA – former website, pre-2010 (for archive and still active webspace):
<http://www.myspace.com/orchestrepoetique> [accessed 09/10/2011]

Stérotypes: <http://www.myspace.com/stereotypeskmk> [accessed 27/02/2011]

Tactikollectif: <http://www.tactikollectif.org/> [accessed 02/06/2010]

Tactikollectif – description of Zebda:

http://www.tactikollectif.org/article.php3?id_article=30 [accessed 07/08/2010]

Tactikollectif - description of Origines Contrôlées festival:

http://www.tactikollectif.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=36 [accessed 07/08/2010]

Tactikollectif - editorial for *Origines Contrôlées*, 5th edition:

http://www.tactikollectif.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=88#nb1 [accessed 02/06/2010]

Tarace Boulba: <http://taraceboulba.com/accueil/> [accessed 19/12/2011]

Voukouv – *Déboulé An-Tan-Révolisyon*, February 2009:

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7bix9_carnaval-en-temps-revolution-voukou_music
[accessed 06/12/2011]

Voukouv: <http://www.potomitan.info/gwadeloup/voukoum.php> [accessed 05/12/2011]

Voukouv – *programme d'activités 2008*:

<http://www.potomitan.info/gwadeloup/voukoum2008.php> [accessed 03/04/2009]

Voukouv – *programme d'activités 2010*:

<http://www.potomitan.info/gwadeloup/voukoum2010.php> [accessed 14/05/2010]

Voukouv – *programme d'activités 2011*:

<http://www.potomitan.info/gwadeloup/voukoum2011.php> [accessed 05/12/2011]

Zebda: <http://zebda.artiste.universalmusic.fr/> [accessed 28/12/2011]

ZEP – Zone d'Expression Populaire: <http://www.zep-site.com/> [accessed 25/02/2012]

2. Other electronic resources

Act'Up website: <http://www.actupparis.org/> [accessed 28/06/2011]

Agir contre le Chômage (AC !): <http://www.ac.eu.org/> [accessed 02/12/2009]

ACLEFEU – Launching of the Tour de France:

http://aclefeu.blogspot.com/2006/03/le-collectif-de-clichy-sous-bois_24.html

[accessed 02/06/2011]

Alliance Générale contre le Racisme et pour le respect de l'Identité Française et chrétienne.

(AGRIF) : <http://www.lagrif.fr/> [accessed 08/02/2012]

Association des Travailleurs Maghrébins de France (ATMF):

<http://www.atmf.org/> [accessed 02/10/2009]

AnthroBase – definition of 'culture': <http://www.anthrobase.com/Dic/eng/def/culture.htm>

[accessed 22/11/2011]

BBoykonsian – La K-Bine's label also used as a '*rap conscient*', interactive social media platform : <http://www.bboykonsian.com/> [accessed 29/02/2012]

Bladi news; article 'de Villiers lance sa campagne présidentielle sur les traces de Le Pen', September 2005, retrieved at:

<http://www.bladi.net/forum/49415-villiers-lance-campagne-presidentielle-traces-pen/>

[accessed 22/11/2011]

Charter of the Collectif des Féministes pour l'Égalité (CFPE), retrieved at:

<http://feministegalite.canalblog.com/> [accessed 22/08/2009]

Coordination des Intermittents et des Précaires région Ile-de France (CIP-IDF) : <http://www.cip-idf.org/> [accessed 06/07/2010]

Collectif des Musulmans de France (CMF): <http://www.lecmf.fr/> [accessed 02/10/2009]

Conseil Représentatif des Associations Noires (CRAN): <http://lecran.org/> [accessed 02/10/2009]

Creative Commons legal code – extracts from licenses: <http://www.creativecommons.org/> [accessed 07/08/2008]

Droit Au Logement (DAL): <http://www.droitaulogement.org/> [accessed 16/08/2010]

Droits Devants: <http://www.droitsdevant.org/> [accessed 04/09/2010]

Débat sur l'identité nationale: <http://www.debatidentitenationale.fr> [accessed 02/06/2010]

Existence Is Resistance – network's mission statement: www.existenceisresistance.org/about [accessed 07/12/2011]

Fédération des Associations de Solidarité avec les Travailleurs Immigrés (FASTI): <http://www.fasti.org/> [accessed 02/10/2009]

Fédération des Tunisiens pour une Citoyenneté des deux Rives (FTCR): <http://www.citoyensdesdeuxrives.eu/better/> [accessed 02/10/2009]

Forum Social des Quartiers Populaires (FSQP): <http://fsqp.fr/> [accessed 29/02/2012]

Host, Jérôme, *Un racisme à peine voilé* (H Prod, 2004). Documentary film on exclusion of hijabi girls from state school, retrieved at : http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7sjan_un-racisme-a-peine-voile-jerome-hos_webcam [accessed 13/07/2008]

Hessler Festival website: <http://www.hesslerstreetfair.org/> [accessed 24/10/2011]

L'humanité – article 'La réponse aux censeurs', November 2005, retrieved at:

http://www.humanite.fr/2005-11-30_Societe-Rap-la-reponse-aux-censeurs.

[accessed 16/12/2007]

Indigènes de la République: <http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/> [accessed 05/03/2009]

Indigènes de la République – *Appel des Indigènes de la République*

(manifesto, or founding text of the movement):

http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id_article=6&var_recherche=appel

[accessed 04/06/2009]

Indigènes de la République – article 'La défaite de la pensée souchienne':

http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id_article=70&var_recherche=souchien

[accessed 07/10/2011]

IRMA (Centre d'Informations & Ressources pour les Musiques Actuelles):

<http://www.irma.asso.fr> [accessed 06/09/2011]

Linton Kwesi Johnson website : <http://www.lintonkwesijohnson.com/> [accessed 29/02/2012]

Liyannaj Kont Pwofitasyon (LKP): <http://www.lkp-gwa.org/> [accessed 24/06/2011]

Logic – 'For my people': <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugAakqxRTgY>

[accessed 29/02/2012]

Mouvement de l'Immigration et des Banlieues (MIB): <http://mibmib.free.fr/>

[accessed 02/10/2009]

MIB 34 – regional network in the Montpellier area: <http://mib34.com/> [accessed 02/10/2009]

Ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Intégration, de l'Identité Nationale et du Développement Solidaire. Retrieved at: <http://www.immigration.gouv.fr/> [accessed 26/07/2009]

Le Monde – article ‘Nicolas Sarkozy persiste et signe contre les racailles’, November 2005, retrieved at: http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2005/11/11/nicolas-sarkozy-persiste-et-signe-contre-les-racailles_709112_3224.html [accessed 30/12/2011]

Le Nouvel Observateur – article ‘Procès d'Houria Bouteldja pour « injure raciale »: décision le 25 janvier’, December 2011, retrieved at:

See <http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/societe/20111214.FAP8991/proces-d-houria-bouteldja-pour-injure-raciale-decision-le-25-janvier.html> [accessed 27/12/2011]

No Vox network: <http://www.no-vox.org/> [accessed 08/12/2011]

NTM – Lyrics and translation for the song ‘*Mais qu'est-ce qu'on attend pour foutre le feu?*’ http://riotsfrance.ssrc.org/Silverstein_Tertreault/ [accessed 30/12/2011]

Rodney P feat. People's Army & Mighty Moe – ‘Live up’: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXRjhlmob_U [accessed 29/02/2012]

Sniper – accusation of anti-semitism: http://www.humanite.fr/2003-11-11_Societe_-Affaire-Sniper-La-mauvaise-cible-de-Sarkozy. [accessed 29/09/2011]

Sniper – report on the trial verdict: <http://lci.tf1.fr/france/2005-12/rappeurs-sniper-relaxes-4861078.html> [accessed 07/08/2011]

Spectrzone – review of the Laclau & Mouffe (2001), retrieved at: <http://www.spectrzone.org/reviews/laclaumouffe.htm> [accessed 31/12/2011]

Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy online: <http://plato.stanford.edu/> [accessed 02/06/2010]

Technoscience, scientific encyclopaedia online – definition of ‘culture’:

<http://www.techno-science.net/?onglet=glossaire&definition=5826> [accessed 27/12/2011]

Uni-e-s contre l’immigration jetable: <http://www.contreimmigrationjetable.org/>

[accessed 08/09/2009]

Yvelines local council:

http://www.yvelines2.yvelines.fr/communiqués/frequence_78_01-10_04.html

[accessed 12/10/2009]

Empirical resources

1. Existing cultural production – discography of case studies used in analysis

Jolie Môme, *Jolie Môme* (self-produced, 1998) LP

_____, *Rouge Horizon* (self-produced, 1999) LP

_____, *Pendant c'temps là* (self-produced, 2001) LP

_____, *Légitime Colère* (self-produced, 2003) LP

_____, *Basta Ya* (self-produced, 2007) LP

_____, *Parole de Mutins* (self-produced, 2011) LP

Keny Arkana, *Le Missile est Lancé* (La Callita, 2004)

_____, *Mixtape vol. 1: L'Esquisse* (La Callita, 2005) LP

_____, *La Rage* (Because Music, 2006) EP

_____, *Entre Ciment et Belle Etoile* (Because Music, 2006) LP

_____, *Victoria* (Because Music, 2007) EP

_____, *Désobéissance* (Because Music, 2008) LP

_____, *L'Esquisse 2* (Because Music, 2011) LP

La Rumeur, *1er volet: Le poison d'avril* (Fuas, 1997) EP

_____, *2ème volet: Le franc-tireur* (Fuas, 1998) EP

_____, *L'entre-volets* (Pias, 1999) EP

_____, *3ème volet: Le Bavar et le Paria* (Fuas, 1999) EP

_____, *Je connais tes cauchemars* (EMI Music, 2002) EP

_____, *L'ombre sur la mesure* (EMI Music, 2002) LP

_____, *Nous sommes les premiers...* (EMI Music, 2003) EP

_____, *Pourquoi On Resterait Calmes* (La Rumeur Records, 2004) EP

_____, *Regain de tension* (La Rumeur Records, 2004) LP

_____, *Du cœur à l'outrage* (La Rumeur Records, 2007) LP

_____, *1997 - 2007: les inédits* (La Rumeur Records, 2007) LP

Ministère des Affaires Populaires, *Debout Là D'dans* (Booster/Pias, 2006) LP

_____, *Grain d'sel* (Booster/Pias, 2007)

_____, *La chasse est ouverte* (Pias, 2008)

_____, *Les bronzés font du ch'ti* (Pias, 2009) LP

Moleque de Rua, First record [name unknown] (self-produced, 1988) EP

_____, *Moleque de Rua* (Sony Brazil, 1991) LP

_____, *Street Kids of Brazil* (Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue/ Crammed, 1995) LP

_____, *Pimenta Malagueta* (self-produced, 2000) LP

_____, *Final Feliz* (CCR/Naïve, 2004) LP

_____, *Utopia Agora* (CCR/Naïve, 2007) LP

Mouss & Hakim *ou le contraire* (Atmosphériques, 2005) LP

_____ *présentent*

Origines Contrôlées: chansons de l'immigration algérienne (Tactikollectif, 2007) LP

_____ *Vingt d'Honneur* (Believe/L'Autre Distribution, 2010), LP

Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre (OPA).

OPA, *Live Alone à l'Inca, 28 janvier 2007* (self-produced, 2007) LP

_____, *Live au BT59, septembre 2007* (self-produced, 2007) LP

_____, *Live au Son'Art, 10 novembre 2007* (self-produced, 2007) EP

_____, *Live au Bokal, 17 mai 2008* (self-produced, 2008) LP

_____, *Live au Pick Up, 1^{er} novembre 2008* (self-produced, 2008) EP

_____, *Live au Samovar, 10 octobre 2008* (self-produced, 2008) LP

_____, *Live au Z'Ubu, 1³ décembre 2008* (self-produced, 2008) LP

_____, *Live Studio Barbey* (self-produced, 2008) LP

_____, *Live au Boqueron, 22 octobre 2009* (self-produced, 2009) LP

_____, *Live au Bikini, Toulouse, 22 janvier 2011* (self-produced, 2011) LP

_____, *Live La Dynamo, 26 septembre 2011* (self-produced, 2011) EP

_____, *Live à Saint-Michel* (self-produced, 2011) EP

_____, *Live à Libourne* (self-produced, 2011) EP

_____, *Live à Terre-Blanche* (self-produced, 2011) LP

_____, *Live Hell Boqueron* (self-produced, 2011) LP

Stéréotypes, *Six pieds sur terre* (KMK Prod, 2007) LP

Tarace Boulba, *A la demande générale*: 1st edn in 1995 (Julisa/Socadisc) LP

3rd edn currently available (Formidable/Fairplay, 2006).

_____, *Une fois encore* (Formidable/Fairplay, 2000) LP

_____, *Merci pour le tiep* (Formidable/Fairplay, 2006) LP

Voukoum, *On Larel On Lespri* (self-produced/Melodie, 1996) LP

_____, *Lokans E Repriz* (Joab/Melodie, 1999) LP

_____, *An Lari-la/ Trans-la* (Joab/Melodie, 1999) EP

2. Specific archives: cultural associations documents

(relevant only for certain case studies)

- *Jolie Môme:*

- miscellaneous internal documents (featuring organisational information and balance sheet elements, and an impressive compilation of press releases).

- *Moleque de Rua & Voukoum / Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue:*

- miscellaneous internal documents relative to the association *Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue* (featuring organisational information, a general presentation of the mission statement and different projects of the association, project-specific brochures).

- Pasquier, Jacques / *Les Gamins de l'Art-Rue* (2002), 'La parole à Duda et Moleque de Rua', in *Les Cahiers de Fanfare* (Marseille: published by *Friche la Belle de Mai*)

- *Mouss & Hakim / Origines Contrôlées / Tactikollectif:*

- miscellaneous internal documents relative to the association *Tactikollectif* and the *Origines Contrôlées* project (featuring organisational information, a general presentation of the mission statement and different projects of the association, project-specific brochures, and an impressive compilation of press releases)

- *La Tactik Collective, la revue du Tactikollectif et de Zebda* (Toulouse: Tactikollectif, c. 2002).

- *Origines Contrôlées, La Revue*, N°2, Oct. 2006 ((Toulouse: Tactikollectif).

- *Origines Contrôlées, La Revue*, N° 3, Autumn 2007 (Toulouse: Tactikollectif).

- *Stéréotypes / KMK:*

- miscellaneous internal documents (featuring organisational information, a general presentation of the mission statement and different projects of the association, project-specific documents).

- *Tarace Boulba:*

- miscellaneous internal documents (featuring organisational information, a general presentation of the mission statement and different projects of the association, project-specific documents).

3. Self-generated documents

A comprehensive list of the empirical activities undertaken and resources gathered may be found in Appendix 3. The following list only mentions formal self-generated archives:

3.1 Webreviews

For each case study, a *webreview* was undertaken, proceeding to searching on the Internet via Google the name of the case studies and in some cases if deemed insufficient, some of the key terms associated with the case studies.

The *webreview* is the document compiling the results of this Internet search – up to 25 pages of Googlesearch results for names of case studies (i.e., 250 resulting web pages), and up to 15 pages for derived terms (150 webpages)

Jolie Môme webreview. Last updated 08/09/2011.

Keny Arkana webreview. Last updated 24/10/2011.

La Rumeur webreview. Last updated 12/07/2011.

Ministère des Affaires Populaires webreview. Last updated 16/10/2011.

Moleque de Rua webreview. Last updated 12/07/2011.

Mouss & Hakim / Origines Contrôlées webreview. Last updated 16/10/2011.

Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre webreview. Last updated 08/09/2011.

Stéréotypes webreview. Last updated 12/07/2011.

Tarace Boulba webreview. Last updated 24/10/2011.

Voukoum webreview. Last updated 24/10/2011.

3.2 Interviews

Jolie Môme.

Formal, recorded interviews with Pascale Zanelli & Michel Roger, 6th & 8th April 2006.

Keny Arkana.

Informal discussions / focus groups; informal interview (unrecorded) with Keny Arkana & members of the Appel Aux Sans Voix initiative, 10th May 2007. No transcription available.

La Rumeur.

Formal, recorded interview with Mohamed Bourokba (a.k.a. Hamé), 18th June 2006.

Ministère des Affaires Populaires.

Formal, recorded interview with Saïd (a.k.a., Dias), 6th November 2007.

Moleque de Rua.

Informal discussions / focus groups; no formal, recorded interview or transcription available.

Mouss & Hakim / Origines Contrôlées.

Formal interviews with Mustapha Amokrane (a.k.a. Mouss), 23rd June & 18th October 2007. No audio recording or transcription available.

Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre.

Formal interview with Myriam Erckert, 15th June 2007. No audio recording or transcription available.

Stéréotypes.

Formal interview with Dario Anatole, 15th October 2007 & 27th November 2010. No audio recording or transcription available for first interview, video recording for second interview.

Tarace Boulba.

Formal interview with Rachid Ouai, 21st June 2007. No audio recording or transcription available.

Voukoum.

Informal discussions / focus groups; no formal, recorded interview or transcription available.

3.3 Observation

- *Fieldwork journal* (2006-2007):

Observation notes taken during empirical stage of research (March 2006-November 2007), featuring attendance to a number of significant cultural and political events (concerts, performances, debates, forums, informal or more formal discussions, etc.);

- *Other:*

See also Appendix 3 for a comprehensive list of the empirical activities undertaken.

Corpus Operum.

Case studies discography used in discursive analysis.

We will define as *corpus operum* the discography selected for our discursive analysis (i.e., of lyrics) undertaken in Chapter V.

The overwhelming gist of the empirical investigation was carried out between March 2006 and November 2007. Yet in some instances, discography was extended after November 2007 (JM, KA, MAP, OPA). Therefore for the purpose of our analysis, it was decided that any record production released after November 2007 would either form a marginal part of discursive analysis, or it was deemed altogether unsuited to be part of the *corpus operum*.

Jolie Môme (JM): *Jolie Môme* (self-produced, 1998) LP
Rouge Horizon (self-produced, 1999) LP
Pendant c'temps là (self-produced, 2001) LP
Légitime Colère (self-produced, 2003) LP
Basta Ya (self-produced, 2007) LP

Keny Arkana (KA): *Mixtape vol. 1: L'Esquisse* (La Callita, 2005) LP
Entre Ciment et Belle Etoile (Because Music, 2006) LP
Désobéissance (Because Music, 2008) LP

La Rumeur (LR): *L'ombre sur la mesure* (EMI Music, 2003) LP
Regain de tension (La Rumeur Records, 2004) LP
Du cœur à l'outrage (La Rumeur Records, 2007) LP

Ministère des Affaires Populaires (MAP): *Debout Là D'dans* (Booster/Pias, 2006) LP
Grain d'sel (Booster/Pias, 2007) EP
Les bronzés font du ch'ti (Pias, 2009) LP

Moleque de Rua (MR): *Street kids of Brazil* (Gamins de l'Art-Rue/Crammed, 1995) LP
Final Feliz (CCR/Naïve, 2004) LP
Utopia Agora (CCR/Naïve, 2007) LP

Mouss & Hakim présentent Origines Contrôlées (MHOC):

Chansons de l'immigration algérienne (Taktikollectif, 2007) LP

Orchestre Poétique d'Avant-Guerre (OPA):

Live Alone à l'Inca, 28 janvier 2007 (self-produced, 2007) LP

Stéréotypes (ST): *Six pieds sur terre* (KMK Prod, 2007) LP

Tarace Boulba (TB): *Une fois encore* (Formidable/Fairplay, 2000) LP

A la demande générale (Formidable/Fairplay, 2006) LP

Merci pour le tiep (Formidable/Fairplay, 2006) LP

Voukoum (VK): *On Larel On Lespri* (self-produced/Melodie, 1996) LP

Lokans E Repriz (Joab/Melodie, 1999) LP

An Lari-la/ Trans-la (Joab/Melodie, 1999) EP

Audio resources

Relevant discography, or audio resources cited;
excluding the direct, existing production of our artists discussed throughout this research.

1. Audio resources related to artists selected as case studies (direct circle)

- *Around La Rumeur:*

Ekoué ed., *Sous les pavés la rage* (Wagram Roots, 2008) compilation

Ekoué, *Nord Sud Est Ouest 1^{er} épisode* (La Rumeur records, 2008) LP

Le Bavar & Ekoué, *Nord Sud Est Ouest 2^{ème} épisode* (La Rumeur records, 2009) LP

Hamé – Casey – Zone Libre, 'L'angle mort', *L'angle mort* (T-Rec/Musicast, 2009) EP

- *Around Ministère des Affaires Populaires:*

HK & les Saltimbanks, *Citoyen du Monde !* (Pias, 2011) LP

ZEP (Zone d'Expression Populaire), *Nique la France; Devoir d'insolence*

(Darna ed. / Court-Circuit, 2011) LP & book

- *Around Mouss & Hakim:*

100% Collègues, *100% Collègues En Concert* (Corrida, 1996), LP

_____, *100% Collègues 2* (La Tawa/Corrida, 2000), LP

Motivés, *Motivés, Chants de Lutte* (Tactikollectif, 1996) LP

Zebda, *Bird* (Vitécric, 1985) EP

_____, *Des Mots Crasseux* (Mustang, 1989) EP

_____, *Carte Nationale d'Identité* (self-produced, 1989) LP

_____, *Zebdomania* (self-produced, 1989) LP

_____, *La France* (self-produced, 1989) LP

_____, *L'Arène des Rumeurs* (Nord Sud, 1992) LP

_____, *Le Bruit et l'Odeur* (Barclay, 1995) LP

_____, *Essence Ordinaire* (Barclay, 1998) LP

_____, *Utopie d'Occase* (La Tawa/Barclay, 2002) LP

_____, *La Tawa* (La Tawa/Barclay, 2003) LP

_____, *Second Tour* (Barclay, 2012) LP

2. Other audio resources

Akhénaton, *Sol Invictus* (Hostile/EMI, 2001) LP

IAM, *Ombre est Lumière* (Hostile/EMI, 1993) LP

Lowkey, *Soundtrack to the Struggle* (self-produced, 2011) LP

Mista Rebel Lion, *Contrôle Surprise* (self-produced, 2007) EP

NTM, *Paris sous les bombes* (Epic, 1995) LP

Sheryo, *Le salaire de la galère* (Anfalsh prod, 2001) EP

Sniper, *Du Rire aux Larmes* (Desh, 2001) LP